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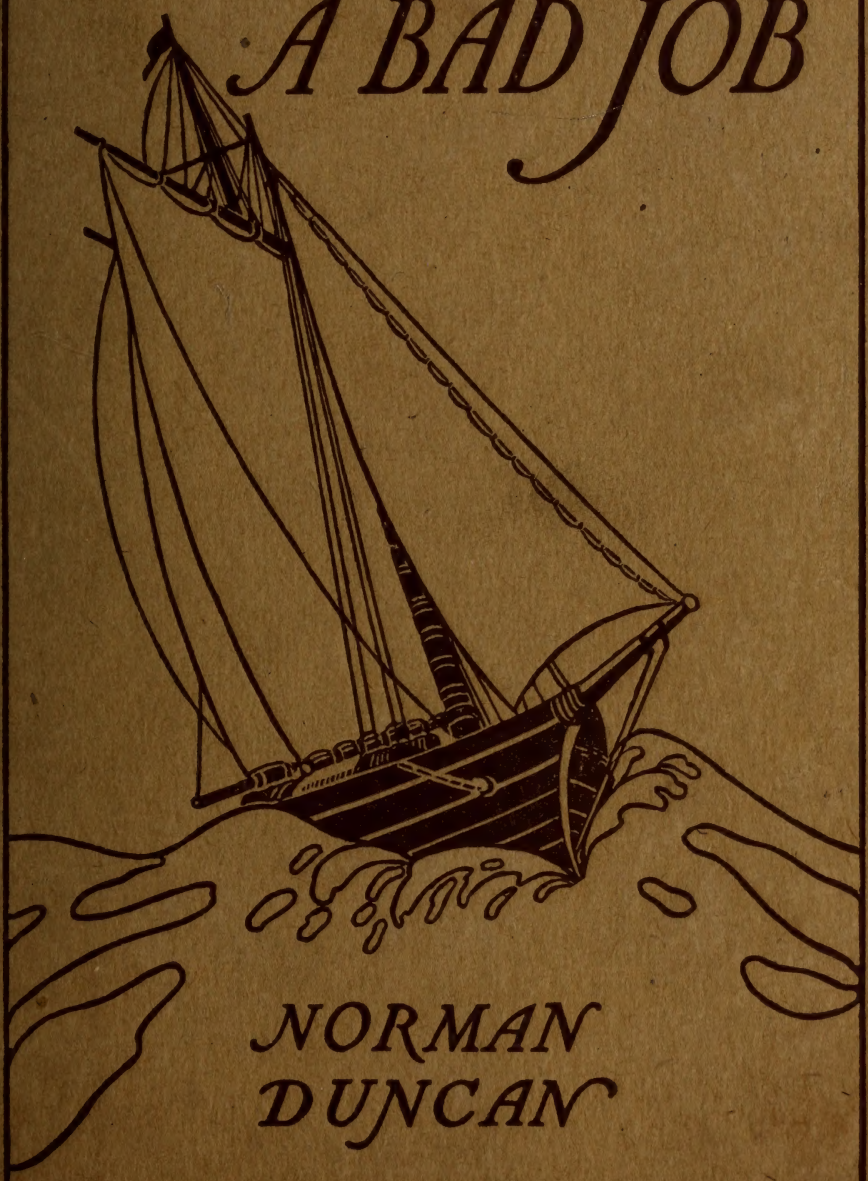

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*The Best of a Bad Job*

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"'I'LL MAKE THE BEST OF A BAD JOB,' THINKS HE. 'I'LL CRAWL.'"

*(page 41)*

# *The Best of a Bad Job*

## *A Hearty Tale of the Sea*

*By*

*NORMAN DUNCAN*

*Author of "Doctor Luke of the Labrador," "The Measure of a Man," etc., etc.*

*New York Chicago Toronto*

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*To*

*Josiah Windsor Manuel*
*aboard the "Fog-Free Zone" in*
*this fall weather*

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# I

## RICKITY TICKLE

IT was beginning to blow when the trader *Quick as Wink* dropped anchor in the lee of Blow-Me of Rickity Tickle. Agile little gusts were already tumbling over the hills to ruffle the soggy calm of harbour; and overhead —between the cozy shelter of the tickle and the dreary gray of day—shreds of white mist were streaming with ominous haste towards the dry inland wastes. The tint and feel of the restless gray world portended storm: so Skipper Jim hung the *Quick as Wink* down for the night; and while the gale was viciously trying to strip the seaward hills of the last branches of the verdure that still remained to grace them we foregathered with the trader of these new days in his shop on the rocks by Squid Cove—old Pinch-a-Penny Peter of other times being then long dead—where Tumm of the *Quick as Wink* began the tale of the man who had made the best of a bad job.

"Pack o' lies!" the cook scoffed, when Tumm had done with the tale for good and all.

"Oh, well, cook," Tumm retorted, grimly, "you're loath t' credit the tale because it shames you!"

Surely not a fair test of the quality of a man! . . . And yet—perhaps so. . . . A singular tale, truly—a shocking humiliation of the achievements of most men! But it was a true enough tale that Tumm began that wild night at Rickity Tickle and went on with in other harbours of the coast. And when you have read the tale through to the end you may discover for yourself whether or not it shames the man that you are. . . .

There is a devil-may-care scattering of black reefs off the narrows to the shelter of the great hills of Rickity Tickle. A naughty place for the mail-boat and strange schooners to be caught of a foggy time or of a night in the dark of the moon! And these frothy fangs—and the soapy seas all roundabout—should be borne in mind. If the reefs are forgotten in the movement of Tumm's incredible yarn the astounding behaviour of old Tom Tulk in the extraordinary

circumstances hereafter to be related will lose its highest significance. Off Rickity Tickle, indeed, lies the meanest patch of outport water known to those harsh parts. It is all sudsy with broken waves in northeasterly gales: in the blowing of which it resembles nothing so nearly, as viewed from the gray smother of the open, as a gigantic basin of mightily agitated lather.

It should be made plain in the beginning, moreover, in somewhat anxious furtherance of Tumm's singular tale, that Rickity Tickle is a fishing outport of the Newfoundland north coast. It is harbour snug enough, to be sure, in any wind—a placid basin, fashioned by Lost Island and a beneficent arm of the Cape, of whose gray rocks the trader's shop and store-houses, and a scattering of squat white cottages, make a sufficient and acceptable home for the lively folk of the place. To deal with deficiency —with a good heart to make the best of short allowance in all things—is the fate and teaching of the coast: otherwise Blind Tom Tulk would surely have capitulated to his astonishing disability and whimpered his way to the grave where his brave old bones were stretched in honour to rest at last.

"Well, well," said Tumm, "'twas short allowance o' sight for ol' Tom Tulk. But ——"

"A hearty ol' codger!" Skipper Jim put in.

"Wonderful ol' feller t' make the best of a bad job," the first-hand contributed.

"Never done nothin' else," said the skipper.

"Oh, ay!" Tumm objected. "There was a time when ol' Tom didn't make the best of a bad job. Ol' Tom was jus' like the rest of us. Life had t' teach un. An' the best lesson life teached un was the hardest t' learn. T' make the best of a bad job upon all occasions was one o' the things ol' Tom learned late in life."

"He learned well," the skipper observed.

"Oh, ol' Tom was clever enough!"

"Who teached un, Tumm?"

"A li'l' kid."

"'Twas long ago, then," said the skipper. "I never heard tell o' that."

"Long ago?" Tumm mused. "Ay—'twas long ago." He laughed softly. "'Twas in the days o' Jack the Giant-Killer."

It is Tumm's tale. . . .

## II

### CAST AWAY

"TOM TULK was well over the long hill o' life when he got cast away at the ice," Tumm began. "A gray ol' codger even then! Had the ol' feller been cronies with Trouble after that there would never have been a tale o' he on this coast. But Tom Tulk was never cronies with Trouble but once; an' I 'low he got enough of it that time. Cronies with Trouble? Not he! '*Me* cronies with Trouble?' says Tom, when life had teached un not t' be. 'Not much! I've too much self-respect. You'll never cotch *me* in low company. My friends is Laughter from Get-Along-Somehow,' says he, 'an' my best bedfellow is called Grit.' It hadn't always been true: but 'twas true enough when he said it. An' moreover ol' Tom Tulk was bound and determined that he'd leave a tale on the coast t' *prove* that 'twas true—a tale t' be told in the forecastles o' the Labrador craft o' windy nights in harbour.

"'I've no fortune t' leave nobody,' says he. 'I'll leave a tale for all. 'Twill do well enough t' keep me in remembrance when I'm gone from these shores for good an' all.'

"'What kind of a tale?' says I.

"'What kind of a tale?' says he. 'I'll live an' leave a tale with a moral, Tumm, as every good man should do.'

"'What's the use?' says I.

"''Tis better than riches,' says he; 'an' it goes further an' lasts a sight longer.'

"An' ol' Tom left for legacy the tale that I'll tell.

"'Twill do well enough t' begin the queer tale o' Tom Tulk at the time when he got cast away at the ice an' earned the name o' Blind Tom Tulk. What happened then an' thereafter shows what manner o' man he come t' be when the little Giant-Killer's teachin' had give un a compass o' Truth t' guide his course in the world. A tough yarn, too! A yarn past belief in the softer places t' the s'uth'ard o' these rocks! An' yet 'twas not the big adventure o' Tom Tulk's life—not the tale with a moral that he wanted t' live with a blithe heart an' leave

behind as the legacy of his life for the good o' the coast he was born on. That come later: it come at the end o' life, when Blind Tom Tulk's ol' bones was all tired out with goin' about in the world an' his spirit was achin' for flight t' far-away places. Of that I'll tell in due course; an' I'll have you bear this in mind for the time: that what Tom Tulk had come t' be—an' that what he done on the floe in a gale an' a half—an' that what he said in his bed at Rickity Tickle when they had stretched un there t' lie—was all due t' the little life the Giant-Killer had lived an' t' the quaint little death he died.

"'My favourite Bible text,' says ol' Tom Tulk, when the Giant-Killer had slipped away for good an' all, 'is this: "A little kid makes the best pilot."'

"The *Blue Streak* was a naughty fore-an'-aft schooner from Bonavist' Bay. She was swilein' (sealing) that season from Rickity Tickle, with Tom Tulk master for Pinch-a-Penny Peter, the Rickity Tickle trader o' them old days. We was caught in a change o' wind by the inshore ice-pack off Little Pony o' the Horse Islands. Hard an' fast, ecod! The *Blue Streak* was clutched an' held. An' after that she was at

the mercy o' the ice. Where went the pack, there went the schooner: an' this until the wind should choose t' blow the ice far out t' sea an' scatter it broadcast. An' 'twas the whim o' the wind t' switch again. It come on t' blow offshore that night at the pitch of a gale an' a half. There was the dust o' snow in the gale. 'Twas a brutal dark time. An' 'twas keen-edged an' frosty with nor'west weather. Still an' all we rode easy in our minds. 'Twas the weather we wished for—a big wind, blowin' offshore as if it meant t' continue. The ice-pack was movin' out t' the open, whipped up, faster an' faster, by the gale behind. 'Twould presently go abroad—be scattered broadcast over the sea—an' free the ol' *Blue Streak* t' go her way.

"Afore dawn—an' a slow dawn it was, when it come, a dawn gray an' sullen, held back beyond its time by a weight o' cloud in the east—jus' afore dawn the schooner was still fast in the grip o' the floe. An' dead ahead, in the path o' the wind an' ice, lay the Blueblack Shoal. No need t' see the Blueblack Shoal. Us could hear it. An' 'twas doom for we—an' a sorry death for any ship t' die! The Blue-

black Rocks are never free o' the sea. At high tide, with the swells rollin' in, they spout like a fountain; an' at low water, in quiet weather, they boil an' bubble like a pot on the fire. An' now, with the ice crunchin' over them, 'twas a fearsome sight they furnished t' strained eyes in the last dusk o' night. There was no stoppin' that ice: it went over an' on—pushed by the pack behind an' splintered t' fragments in the passage. But from time t' time there would come a jam o' great pans; an' the pack would pile up, pan upon pan, heap upon heap, until there was a mountain of ice, which would all at once break an' vanish in the dusk with the crash an' rumble of an earthquake. Man, the noise of it! An' the power of it! An' the terror of it! An' withal the *Blue Streak* was bound straight into the thick o' that horrible confusion. A slow course: she was at ease, as if lyin' in harbour. But she was doomed. Doom? Ay—doom! An' doom comin' quick enough an' sure! For look you!—with the schooner fast in the floe there was no way t' fend off wreck. She would be gone t' pulpwood an' splinters within the hour.

"'A bad job,' says ol' Tom Tulk.

"'She'll strike,' says the first hand.

"'Ay,' says Tom. 'Us'll have t' make the best of it.'

"'Every man for himself,' says the first hand.

"'Oh, no!' says Tom. 'Not yet. There's no tellin' what this ice will do. It may shift. Keep the lads aboard until I give the word t' go overside.'

"Well, us waited. There was jus' one thing t' do. That was t' get over the side o' the schooner an' as far off on the ice as need be. There wasn't no hurry. An' there wasn't no sense in makin' too much haste. 'Plenty o' time, lads!' says Tom. 'Twas a bad job, sure enough—no doubt about that: but the way t' make the best of it was not by harbourin' fear an' complaint. An' so us waited in good temper for ol' Tom t' sing out 'Every man for himself!' An' ol' Tom begun t' cluck an' whistle jus' as if the doomed *Blue Streak* lay in harbour with a fair wind brewin' for the cruise she was bound on. That was ol' Tom's way. 'My friends is Laughter from Get-Along-Somehow,' says he; 'an' my best bedfellow is called Grit.'

An' so presently the lads was all laughin' a bit an' skylarkin' over the dark deck. You'd never think—now believe me—that 'twould not be long afore every mother's son of un would be cast away on the ice an' movin' out t' the North Atlantic with a gale an' a half behind.

"'Where's the cook?' says Tom.

"'Here I is, sir.'

"'Well, well, b'y,' says Tom, 'leave us have a cup o' tea. Serve all hands, lad, an' be free with it.'

"'Tea!' says the cook.

"'What you lookin' at, cook?'

"'I'm lookin' at the Blueblack Shoal, sir.'

"'Too dark t' see much,' says Tom.

"'I can hear, sir.'

"'Oh, well, cook,' says Tom, 'you go below an' brew that tea. Draw it strong. An' show lights on the deck. You got plenty o' time afore your galley gets mixed up with the rudder in the ice on Blueblack.'

"The cook laughed.

"'Ah-ha!' says Tom; 'that's better.'

"So the cook went below an' brewed the tea. An' all hands made a party of it by the

light o' the lanterns. An' they swigged what they wanted an' ate what they wished. When 'twas all over ol' Tom drawled: 'Well, lads, I 'low 'tis every man for himself.' An' then one man was as good as another—an' 'twas every man for himself, indeed, an' the devil take the hindmost—an' all hands took what grub they could carry in their bags an' scrambled over the side t' the ice. 'Twas not long afore the whole crew was gathered on a big pan t' the east o' the shoal—there waitin' in dead silence t' see the ice on Blueblack crunch the bones o' the ol' *Blue Streak*. There was not much t' see: 'twas snowin' thick by this time—thick as a blanket o' fog—an' the day was not yet come, an' the wind was colder an' wilder, an' the schooner was nothin' but a thing o' mist an' cobwebs in the shadows beyond. But yet the crew waited there t' see her masts topple an' her hull crumple up. An' nothin' o' the sort come t' pass. The floe shifted. God knows why! There's no accountin' for the ways of an ice-pack under the wind. 'Twas presently plain that the *Blue Streak* would clear the shoal an' go on unharmed with the ice. An' then there was a mad race t' get

aboard afore she was lost from sight in the snow an' night. Panic enough, now! An' no help an' no mercy! The pack was death: the ship was life.

"'Twas every man for himself an' the devil take the hindmost!

"'Come, lad!' yells Tom. 'We got t' get aboard.'

"I leaped on with Tom.

"'Faster!' says he. 'Faster!'

"I run as fast as I could."

## III

### EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF

"I RECKON that ol' Tom Tulk had a warm spot in his heart for the lad that was I. An' there was good cause for that. I was not yet man grown by more years than one. 'Twas the first time I had ever been cast away. . . . First time! Ecod! Think o' that! A callow child was I. 'Twas the very first time that ever I heard a skipper cry 'Every man for himself!' Ha, ha! An' now I'm an old man, used t' these here coasts—familiar friends with all the winds an' rocks an' fogs an' ice from Twillingate Long Point t' Cape Chidley. I've took my thousand chances: I've been lost seven times. An' I've weathered more troubles o' the sea than I can remember or could count. . . . But whatever an' all about that, ol' Tom Tulk loved me, I reckon, for the things we'd been through in company. I had been through a pother o' weather an' grief with Tom Tulk. I had seed Tom Tulk with his backbone gone limp with fear in a

gale o' wind; an' I had stood beside un when his heart broke—that starry night, with the wind bound down north an' far away an' a scud o' cloud flyin' low over the little cottage at Neck-o'-Land Bight, from which the little Giant-Killer put out t' the uncharted seas which all souls must sail in the end.

"Tom Tulk kep' close alongside. 'God's sake!' says he; 'make haste, lad!'

"'I'm doin' my best, sir.'

"'Ah, but come faster!'

"'Ay, sir.'

"'There'll be a fight,' says he.

"There was no broad light. A weight o' cloud still lay sluggish on the east'ard sea. An' there was a swirl o' snow in the world—like smoke t' breathe an' see through: thick with dusty flakes an' hot with frost. 'Twas the dusk afore dawn. The schooner was vague in the gale—an' seemed in the gray dark t' be as far off as a first landfall. 'Twas rough goin': no level course—but a ragged, jagged jumble of ice. A man must leap an' scramble an' climb with hands an' feet. There was open places, pools o' black water: pitfalls, some o' these—drifted over with false bridges o' soft snow.

I seed ol' Bill Letlive o' Tickle-My-Ribs leap from a mound an' go feet first like a harpoon into the water beneath. Nothin' but a round hole in the snow t' mark his passage when I passed by. . . . Hero? No! I'm no hero at any time. An' 'twas every man for himself at that moment. An' it didn't seem out o' the way or peculiar at all that a man should lose his life. Death? Why, good Lord!—the sight o' death isn't nothin' t' shock a man at a time like that. . . . The *Blue Streak* was now in the lee o' the Blue-black. She had scraped past. An' there was a jam o' pans pilin' up on the rocks. It left a space o' free water beyond. The schooner was slippin' away into the snow an' dark o' dawn. The wind was behind, a gale an' a half: she was goin' fast.

"Then I dropped through an' went under like a lump o' lead. Man, but I was amazed! An' when I come up, shocked an' sputterin', there was ol' Tom Tulk sprawled on the ice with his hand outstretched.

"'Your hand!' says he.

"'Go on, sir!' says I. 'I'm foredone!'

"'Your hand, ye fool!'

"I give un my hand. He clutched it—hauled me close—cotched me by the scruff o' the neck an' jerked me t' the ice. We run on. An' presently we come close t' the side o' the schooner. There was a crowd o' lads fightin' there like beasts. She was goin' faster—always faster. An' 'twas jus' as Tom Tulk had said. There was a brutal fight. The schooner was light. Small fat we had loaded. She floated high. But amidships the rail was within reach from the ice. Very good! An' 'twould all have gone well had the vessel been jammed as she was afore. But in the free water in the lee o' Blueblack she floated in a mush o' small ice. Scarce a cake of it would bear the weight of a man. A man must leap from cake t' cake whilst he watched his chance t' cotch the rail —must leap here an' there an' forever find new foothold lest he drop through an' be lost. An' he must find place where no other man was. An' he must fight like a beast for his life. Curses? Foul curses—from deep in the throat, like the growl o' brute beasts! An' blows an' kicks! An' no help—an' no compassion! God save me from comin' close t' the like o' that in my life again!

"An' all this time the vessel was movin' away. An' in the panic it seemed that she was movin' faster an' faster—that in a moment she'd leave us all behind t' die the death o' hunger an' cold on the floe. An' all this time, too, the ice was pilin' up on the Blueblack Rocks t' win'ward—heapin' up an' up, until it looked like a white mountain in the mist. An' 'twould presently break loose: 'twould come with a rush t' overwhelm them that was left. An' the noise of it!—a rumble an' crash an' groan an' shriek: the thunder o' hell an' the screams o' the damned! I edged into the press o' men. They cast me out. I fell sprawlin' an' rolled into the water. An' jus' as I clambered back on a pan I seed the head o' young Eli Blunt bob up. An' then I seed two pans come together—with young Eli Blunt's head between. . . . It didn't seem nothin' much at the time. 'Twas a thing that a man might expect t' see. 'Twas not shockin' at all. But many a night since then, though years have gone by, I've seed in my dreams, lyin' here in my bunk in the ol' *Quick as Wink*, them two pans come slap together—with poor Eli's head cracked like a nut between. . . . I tried once more t' worm

into the press. I climbed on the back of a man. 'Twas in my mind t' crawl over their heads an' gain the rail. But again I was flung back an' down.

"Tom Tulk picked me up. 'For'ard!' says he.

"I leaped forward in the wake of ol' Tom. 'Twas dance right an' left—lookin' for foothold. But we made it. An' we waited there, under the bow, on a solid pan of ice, until the drift o' the vessel fetched her along.

"'Now, lad!' says Tom.

"'I'll give you a hand, sir,' says I, 'when I'm aboard.'

"'I've these madmen t' save.'

"'Leave un be,' says I.

"'Up!' says he.

"I put my foot in his locked hands an' he fair shot me over the rail. When I got t' my feet—an' when I leaned over the rail t' stretch out a hand t' he—ol' Tom was off in the snow. I could reach un no longer: I could hardly see un at all. But I could hear his voice. 'Twas lifted in command for peace an' in horrible malediction t' gain his end. An' after every explosion o' that profane language I could hear

un mutter in prayer, 'Oh, God, forgive me!'—for he was a man not give t' swearin' in quiet times. . . . An' by this time the lads was comin' aboard fast from the ice. There was hands stretched over the rail in rescue. . . . An' the jam of ice on the Blueblack Rocks broke an' come after us. An' the *Blue Streak* was carried off in the rush. . . . I could see ol' Tom Tulk no longer. I could hear his voice no more. He was left behind an' abandoned. There was a mist o' snow: there was a tumult. It was the dark afore dawn. There was neither sight o' human form in the swirlin' dusk t' win'ward nor cry for help in that confusion. An' when the dawn did come—when the cold light broke through—the *Blue Streak* floated in a narrow circle o' drivin' snow an' was once more jammed fast in the floe."

## IV

### THE ONSLAUGHT

"WELL, now, the *Blue Streak* done well enough. She went on with the ice, jammed tight an' all unmanageable. Skipper Tom was cast away an' abandoned t' the indifferent fortunes o' life. An' in due course, when the wind had blowed the field broadcast, the *Blue Streak* come t' clear water, with the gale fallen to a smart breeze o' wind, an' there gained her freedom. But what in the meantime had happened t' Tom Tulk?—poor ol' Tom Tulk, cast away an' bound out t' the far, deep open, in a cloud o' frosty snow, with a gale an' a half blowin' cold an' cruel as death from the nor'west! This happened: Tom Tulk sot down on a big pan of ice t' ponder his mishap an' exercise what hope an' wisdom he had. An' as he pondered an' brooded, with his back t' the wind an' his head on his breast, it come to un that this was the end o' life. An' he was discouraged—an'

ashamed. An' then he looked up t' search the low, drab swirl o' snow, wishin' for the sight o' some late dawn-star, winkin' from a patch o' still sky. But 'twas broad day, now, beyond the clouds. There was no sky showin': nor was there any little star peepin' out. . . . Funny little beggars—them wee stars! They seems t' know so much more than we. An' all our ignorance an' all our sulks jus' stirs their gentle laughter. A wonderful sense o' humour, ecod! They smiles at all our woes an' pokes fun at the best of our joys. But not unkindly. Oh, no! They winks their tender little messages t' take things easy—t' be rid o' fear an' fret an' t' trust the eternal time they dwells in an' the spaces without end.

"'Ah, well!' thinks Tom Tulk. 'I'll hang on t' my life so long as I'm able. I isn't finished with life. I got a lot more t' do in the world. An' I'll *do* it, ecod, or I'll know the reason why!'

"A poor lookout for more labour in the world o' sea an' shore!

"'I'll make the best of a bad job, anyhow,' thinks Tom, whatever an' all. 'A man can do no more.'

"It may be well enough that he thought o' the Giant-Killer—hangin' offshore, waitin' somewhere. I reckon he did. But o' that he said never a word thereafter. . . . Somehow or other ol' Tom Tulk was not give very much t' talkin' o' the little Giant-Killer—afterwards. . . .

"An' out went the ice—drivin' far t' sea under the wind. An' the snow was a cloud o' frosty dust an' the wind bit fair t' the marrow. An' by an' by the field shifted an' spread an' patches o' ruffled black water opened up. An' then the snow thinned an' gray light fell down. An' then ol' Tom Tulk, hailed from near by, looked about, with his eyes poppin' out, an' beheld Jerry Tall, a widow's son, no more than a lad o' fourteen, squatted on an ice-pan beyond, near buried in a drift o' snow.

"'That you, Skipper Tom?'

"'How come you there, Jerry?'

"'I was kicked in the forehead, sir.'

"'I wisht you was aboard,' says Tom. 'Tis no place for a lad—all alone out here.'

"The lad begun t' whimper.

"'I wouldn't do that,' says Tom.

"'I can't help it, sir,' says the lad. 'I'm woeful—an' I'm afeared.'

"'I wouldn't be afeared, lad. 'Tis not like a man—t' be afeared.'

"'I'm all alone, sir,' the lad whimpered, 'an' I jus' can't help it.'

"'Still an' all,' says Tom, 'I'd not be afeared.'

"'If I wasn't so cold, sir,' says the lad, 'I'd maybe have my courage.'

"'Ay, lad; frost bites the heart.'

"'An' if I wasn't so lonesome, too!'

"'Yet I'd not give way t' my fears.'

"'I isn't able t' help it,' the lad sobbed, 'cast away an' all alone out here.'

"'Ah, well!' says Tom. 'You is only a lad. I'll go over t' your pan for comfort's sake.'

"'There's open water all round about.'

"'I'm an ol' codger, used t' the ice,' says Tom, 'an' I'll manage, never fear. 'Twill be a pleasant thing t' have company out here.'

"'I 'low,' says the lad, 'that I'll say my prayers.'

"''Twill hearten you some,' says Tom.

"'I'll say un, sir, as my mother teached me t' do.'

"'Never was a brave man yet,' says Tom, 'that didn't say the prayers his mother had teached un t' say. I'll be across afore you're through.'

"An' with that Tom Tulk slipped into the water an' swam t' Jerry Tall's pan an' climbed aboard. . . . Somehow or other ol' Tom was never the same after the little Giant-Killer had slipped his cable of a starry night an' gone cruisin' alone t' the far coasts beyond the ken o' the world. . . . Somehow or other ol' Tom was kind t' such as harboured fear an' t' all the young—when the little Giant-Killer had teached un how t' lay hands on his own soul an' win his own victory. . . . An' now, aboard o' Jerry Tall's pan of ice, he stripped t' the skin. An' with the help o' Jerry Tall he wrung out his clothes. An' Jerry was only a lad, quick in changes o' mood—an' ol' Tom was so comical in his naked state in the wind—an' ol' Tom was so full of antics an' laughter—that 'twas not long afore Jerry Tall was laughin', too. An' by the time that ol' Tom was clad again, an' by the time he was leapin' like a young caribou t' start his blood, Jerry Tall was red with warmth an' jollity, an' so heartened, an' so

brave t' face evil fortune, an' so willin' t' look upon his parlous situation as the high adventure of our coasts, that 'twas not long afore ol' Tom was warm, too, an' all flushed with contentment. . . . I reckon the little Giant-Killer's gospel wasn't preached in vain. . . . An' it may be that the little feller, hangin' offshore, somewhere, waitin' with the patience o' time, was glad t' see Tom Tulk so cast that he could hearten the woeful. . . . I don't know. . . . Who can tell? . . .

"The devil an' all t' pay, presently! The ice-field went far abroad. The pan floated in a wide space o' water. Night fell down. The wind come with the cold fingers an' clutch o' death from the nor'west. It come on t' snow again. An' by an' by the sea, clear of ice, free t' rage as it would, got under the pan, an' flung it about, like a chip; an' in the night the pan begun t' crumble—an' fearsomely t' dwindle. . . . An' that went on for a long time. . . . An' God only knows how the wind an' frost can gnaw a man's spirit in the dark! . . . An' then the sea come higher yet. An' little waves begun t' wash the pan—t' flow aboard

an' t' wash back an' forth. An' by an' by these little waves got bigger. The wind-lop was breakin': an' soon thereafter the big swells begun t' curl an' the spume t' mix with the frosty snow in the wind. . . . After midnight the seas was breakin' over the pan knee high. Young Jerry Tall was numb an' hopeless. Nor could ol' Tom Tulk hearten un any more. The lad was cold to his very heart—an' cared no more what might happen. An' then Tom Tulk held him on the pan lest he be washed away an' lost. . . . An' that, too, went on for a long time. But all the while Tom Tulk kept watch for the loom o' spray in the dark—an' for the onslaught an' crash an' flood an' smother o' water that followed. An' all the while he kep' hold o' Jerry Tall.

"'You le' me go!' says Jerry.

"'I can't, lad.'

"'You le' me go, I say!' sobs Jerry. 'I'm tired an' cold, I tells you!'

"'I *can't* let you go, lad!'

"Then a big sea fell down that smothered un both. Tom Tulk lost hold o' the lad. But he cotched the lad again on the edge o' the pan. An' then he lost un once more—an' went off into

the sea with un. An' he looked about for the boy. But Jerry had gone down. An' then ol' Tom Tulk felt that he wanted t' follow the lad. He was old—an' he was all wore out—an' nobody was waitin' at home for he—an' somebody was hangin' offshore in expectation—an' the love o' life for life's sake was not in the ol' man. But yet he had a tale with a moral t' live an' leave behind afore he died. An' so he gathered his courage an' clambered aboard the pan.

"'I've no good excuse for yieldin',' thinks he. 'I'll hang on so long as I'm able, as any good man would do.'

"An' up come the sea—up an' up, under a gale an' a half o' nor'west wintry weather. By an' by the seas was breakin' breast high over the pan. They come out o' the dark—a loom o' white crest: a hiss an' a swish, an' then a blow an' a crash an' a tug. Tom Tulk faced un as they come. He had small leeway. An' the pan was slippery to his feet. But he was nimble an' strong; an' there was by chance a little ridge on the pan, which he found with his toes when he was upright, an' cotched with his fingers when he was knocked down an'

scramblin' in the wash o' spent water. . . . An' that went on for a long, long time. . . . But afore dawn the seas got charged with the slush o' the floe—fragments of ice, made when the big pans had ground together in the press. An' these fragments sorely hurt ol' Tom Tulk. They fell upon his breast an' shoulders. They struck him in the face. They give weight an' new power t' the seas. They knocked un down again an' again. But yet the ol' feller clung t' the life that was in him an' t' the hope that he had. Give in? Not he! Still he faced the seas. . . . An' that, too, went on for a long, long time. . . . An' when the dawn come, at last, the wind switched 'round t' the s'uth'ard, an' the snow stopped, an' the east turned rosy, an' a flood o' yellow light flamed over the sea through rosy rents in the sky. An' afore noon o' that blue day the sea was no worse than a rollin' waste in which the ice-pan floated dry.

"An' then ol' Tom Tulk sot down an' rested. . . ."

## V

### DRAWN BLINDS

"'TWAS spring weather. March is the sealing month. An' it blows hot an' cold—the winds every which way. The wind went t' the s'uth'ard an' swung 'round a bit t' the west o' south. 'Twas a fair an' moderate afternoon. A warm little breeze come snoozin' up from southerly parts. The ice-field had stopped in its tracks; an' now the wind herded it once more an' begun t' drive it back on the coast. It had been footin' it for the Funks: 'twas now lazin' back towards the Horse Islands an' Rickity Tickle. Tom Tulk was somewhere between Mother Burke o' Cape John an' the last rocks o' Newf'un'land with nothin' but the soggy pulp o' hard biscuit in his pocket. Next day the sun was hot in a blue sky. So, too, the next. An' the ice was a scorchin' glare. 'Twas close packed again, by this time: 'twas a vast, white, blindin' waste. An' man, but 'tis awful on the ice-pack of a hot spring day! Tom Tulk reckoned his eyes

wouldn't last overlong in that white light. But thinks he: 'I'll have my life outlast my eyes.' So he made for the nor'west on a run. Thinks he: 'Rickity Tickle is somewheres in that direction an' I'll keep movin' so long as I'm able.' An' he kep' on with good heart until his two eyes was fair fried in his head.

"'My eyes is pretty well scorched,' thinks he. 'I isn't got no sight for walkin' no more.'

"He was snow-blind.

"'I'll use my hands t' feel with,' thinks he. 'Rickity Tickle is somewheres over there. I'll make the best of a bad job,' thinks he. 'I'll crawl.'

"By this time the *Blue Streak* had made Rickity Tickle, her flag at half-mast, with the news that Tom Tulk had been cast away an' lost with young Jerry Tall an' three men o' the crew. 'Twas grievous news: 'twas mourned over—but the tale o' Tom Tulk has nothin' t' do with that. T' be sure, when the wind changed, an' when the ice-field come back t' the coast, our folk begun t' search the pack as best they could for what traces o' death they could find. There was no trace o' the three men

o' the crew: nor was there sign o' young Jerry Tall. But on the fifth day after the *Blue Streak* had scraped the Blueblack Shoal our folk come upon ol' Tom Tulk crawlin' over the ice like a blind bear. An' when they had carried that bag o' bones an' bruised an' frost-bit flesh t' Tom Tulk's cottage by Blow-Me—an' when they had got Tom Tulk stowed away in his bed an' fetched back to his six senses—an' when Tom had told his tale—an' when young Jerry Tall's mother had gone away comfortless—they pitied Tom Tulk an' the blind state he was in. But Tom Tulk would have none o' the pity. He could see no gloomy faces: he was blind an' in the pain o' snow-blindness; but yet he could feel the gloom about his bed. An' he would have neither pity nor gloom in his neighbourhood. Not he! 'Twas his way t' scout an' cure both. An' so he begun t' chuckle.

"'Stone blind when I fell, lads,' says he.

"'Ay, Tom?'

"'Snow on fire,' says he, 'an' my eyes sizzlin' in their sockets.'

"'Sure, Tom! No shame in that.'

"'Couldn't see the tip o' me own nose.'

"'Harsh fortune, Tom.'

"'Awful mess,' says he, 'had me nose itched.'

"'Ay, Tom?'

"'Couldn't have seed t' scratch it!' says he.

"Tom chuckled. Nobody else laughed. 'Twasn't good for the ribs, somehow, t' see blithe ol' Tom Tulk gone snow-blind.

"'Well, well, Skipper Tom,' says Pinch-a-Penny Peter, the trader, 'I'm afeared 'tis last harbour, b'y.'

"'Whose?' says Tom.

"'You'll never see Mugford no more.'

"'Is you alludin' t' me, Peter?'

"'I is, Tom.'

"'Me never see Mugford no more?' says Tom. 'I don't *want* t' see Cape Mugford no more. But please God I'll fish by Thumb-an'-Finger beyond!'

"'Anchor's down, b'y.'

"'Isn't I got ears?'

"'Please God they'll keep on hearin' friendly gossip.'

"'Isn't I got a nose?'

"'Ay, b'y,' says Peter; 'an' please God 'twill take you so far as supper many an evenin' t' come.'

"Tom Tulk sot up in his bed. 'If I can't *see* my way through life, Skipper Peter,' says he—'why, damme, I'll *smell* it!'

"'Good lad!' says they.

"'I'll make the best of a bad job,' says Tom. 'You mark *me!*'

"Pinch-a-Penny Peter laughed. An' they says that Skipper Tom throwed back his head an' laughed too. Ecod, but the ol' feller was wonderful well found in respect t' good humour an' satisfaction! There he lay, for the time, as blind as a bat. 'I'll make the best of a bad job,' says he. 'You mark *me!*' An' he done it."

Tumm laughed a little.

## VI

### A GALE O' WIND

NOW the gale was down in earnest—gusts of wind falling in whirlpools over the cliff and troubling the trader's shop; and the rain was drumming on the roof and the night was noisy with big seas rumbling like far-away thunder on the rocks at the narrows of Rickity Tickle. We were cognizant of all this—and warmly glad to be in harbour—in the silence that fell when Tumm's little laugh had expired in a doubtful chuckle. I wondered how it had come about that old Tom Tulk could make a jest of his blindness. How was it that the old fellow could vow with a grin that he would "smell" his way through life if he could not "see" it? How had he learned to make the best of a bad job? Who had taught him? Who was Jack the Giant-Killer? And how was it possible for the blind skipper of a Labradorman to live and leave a tale with a moral for the more fortunate?—a tale heroic

enough to be told in the forecastles of Labrador craft to this day. And yet all this had come to pass: and concerning it all Tumm told.

Skipper Jim of the *Quick as Wink* broke in upon the muse with a loud guffaw.

"Wonderful ol' hand t' make the best of a bad job!" he roared. "That was Tom Tulk!"

"T' the end," Tumm agreed.

"Beginnin' t' end!" Skipper Jim declared.

"Oh, no!" said Tumm. "Not so. An' that's the tale I'm tellin'.

"It hadn't always been that way with Tom Tulk by no manner o' means," the clerk went on. "As I've said, a man isn't born t' humour an' grit like that: he must learn it. There was a time when Tom Tulk was yellow t' the core of his long backbone. I was aboard: I seed it with my own eyes—an' a show o' cowardice is a thing no man can forget. But 'twas love that made Tom Tulk what he was at that time: an' so maybe there's some excuse. Long afore ol' Tom got cast away at the ice—long ago when Tom skippered the trader *Call Again* for Pinch-a-Penny Peter with Jot-it-Down Jones for clerk—we was one day lyin' at

Poor Luck Harbour for shelter in a sou'easterly wind. 'Twas moderate enough, by an' by, for a skipper o' good heart. 'Twas the tail of a gale. There was little whisps o' wind still abroad in harbour; but the sea beyond had turned from white t' gray and was fallin' flat an' black under the rain.

"Jot-it-Down Jones come on deck t' take a squint at the weather. 'Ah-ha, Tumm!' says he, rubbin' his hands; 'the wind's flopped. For'ard there, Skipper Tom, ol' top!' he sung out.

"Skipper Tom come aft.

"'Leave us get t' sea out o' this,' says Jot-it-Down Jones. 'Call the hands.'

"Tom Tulk pondered—an' took a long look at the sea far past the narrows—an' sniffed the weather—an' pondered a bit more—an' scratched his beard—an' looked Jot-it-Down Jones in the eye through small slits in his own.

"'Would you?' says he.

"'Would I!' cries Jot-it-Down. 'Ay, sure, lad!'

"'Hm-m!' says the skipper, scratchin' his beard. 'In—*this* wind?'

"'Sure, why not, man?'

"'Blowin' hard,' says Tom.

"'Oh, Lord!' Jot-it-Down groaned. 'Is you came to a pass like this, Tom Tulk? Oh, Tom Tulk—Tom Tulk!' An' he turned away from the skipper.

"'Gale o' wind,' says Tom.

"Jot-it-Down flashed about on Tom Tulk. An' the little runt's face was all scrunched up with worry an' disgust. 'Hist!' says he. 'They'll hear you for'ard an you don't look out.'

"'Well,' says Tom, 'I—I—I got the lives o' my crew on my conscience.'

"'Will you put t' sea?'

"'Me?'

"'Ay, you! Who else?'

"'Too much wind,' says Tom.

"Ol' Pots-an'-Pans, peelin' potatoes in the galley door amidships, laughed. An' Jot-it-Down Jones scuttled back in a rage. 'What you laughin' at?' says he.

"'Nothin',' says the cook.

"'Nothin', ye dunderhead!' says Jot-it-Down Jones.

"'Jus' nothin'.'

"'There's on'y one thing a man can laugh at aboard this here schooner,' says Jot-it-Down Jones, 'an' that's *me*.'

"'I wasn't laughin' at nothin',' says the cook.

"'Then they got a place in the madhouse for *you*,' says Jot-it-Down Jones. 'Don't you cackle at nothin' no more. 'Twill bring you to a straight-jacket if you does.' An' he come aft in a rage that fair choked un. 'Skipper Tom,' says he, with a warm little smile, such as folk gives t' little kids, 'they isn't nothin' out there at sea t' hurt the *Call Again*. Take my word for it, man, will you not? She's able for the wind that blows. An' I'm fair mad with haste t' make Rickity Tickle an' get back t' the north coast t' collect my fish. Won't you put t' sea? You an' me is been friends for a long, long time. Won't you put t' sea, Skipper Tom—jus' t' 'blige *me?*'

"Skipper Tom pondered.

"'God's sake,' says Jot-it-Down Jones, 'call the crew!'

"'Me?'

"'Isn't nobody else t' do it!'

"Skipper Tom looked out t' sea—an' squirmed.

An' I 'lowed he'd fair *have* t' put out t' save hisself the misery o' bidin' in.

"'Won't you, Tom?'

"'Well, no,' says the skipper o' the *Call Again*. 'I 'low I won't. Too much wind out there t' risk it.'

"Jot-it-Down Jones dived down t' the cabin in a rage he could master no longer. An' in disgust, too; an' in pity. An' Skipper Tom flinched—an' felt a curdle o' soul, I've no doubt—but tweaked his beard in a very wise way, an' sighed, an' went for'ard, with his head down. An' I'd no fancy t' see *that*—a big, kind man like Tom Tulk, a tender heart an' a clean soul, timid o' the wind that was blowin'! An' I'd no fancy t' hear un sigh, an' t' mark his meek way, an' t' be witness of his shame, an' t' hear the cook's cackle, an' t' watch Skipper Tom close his ears t' the sound, an' t' know, as then I knowed, that Skipper Tom was a coward, an' that he knowed he was a coward, an' that he knowed that we knowed he was a coward, but hoped, all the time, that we didn't know that he knowed. 'Tis a pitiful thing t' see a big man swallow his shame—gulp it without a wry face—an' go off in meek make-believe

o' no knowledge that his soul's read like a book.

"It doesn't sound like Tom Tulk, do it? Ah, well, he was not then like the man that he used t' be in his youth an' was soon t' become again. An' you bear in mind what Tom Tulk used t' say after the little Giant-Killer had teached un how t' live.

"'My friends is Laughter from Get-Along-Somehow,' says he; 'an' my best bedfellow is called Grit.'

"Maybe then you won't think so ill o' Tom Tulk."

## VII

### THE COWARD

"JOT-IT-DOWN JONES was so lean an' so small that he was hard put to it t' keep his feet in a breeze o' wind. He was a weazened little runt of a man, with spindle shanks, bowed like a hoop, as though he'd sot on a cask overmuch in his youth. His tongue was goin' at a clatter, an' his little eyes was twinklin', when trade was brisk; but he was ill at ease an' downcast in dull times. An' he was as restless as a jumpin'-jack, good season or bad. He must drive north, whatever the wind, or run south, or beat t' the Labrador. 'More fish beyond!' says he, all the time; 'more fish beyond!' He was fair mad t' trade for fish: there isn't no tellin' t' what wild length o' risk an' hardship an' crime he'd go—an' drive the crew without mercy—t' get a stack o' dry cod from a bay-noddie's stage t' the hold of his own schooner. But he had such a way with the maids—an' such manners with the wives—an' such tricks for the babies—an'

such a store o' yarns an' laughter an' rum for the men—that they give un his welcome wherever he went an' called un Jot-it-Down Jones with a wink.

"As for me, I was but a young lad in them days—a lad o' fourteen or thereabouts. Jot-it-Down Jones boarded in my father's house at Rickity Tickle when he was in harbour; an' he had me aboard the *Call Again* because I had plagued un so t' take me.

"In the cabin, that night, when Skipper Tom had gone for'ard t' turn in, sheer worry got the better o' poor Jot-it-Down Jones. 'I'm fair losin' my wits an' seven senses along o' ol' Tom Tulk,' says he, 'an' God knows my health's leakin' like a basket! Tom Tulk turned timid—an' worse this season, by the signs, than ever he were afore! An' here's poor Pinch-a-Penny Peter's fortune scattered from Rickity Tickle t' Soap-an'-Water an' Mother Burke—flour, an' salt, an' good fat pork, an' traps an' twine. An' how is I goin' t' get fish back for them supplies? By yelpin' at a breeze o' wind—an' reefin'—an' lyin' like a log in harbour? Breeze o' wind, ecod! What's a breeze o' wind

*for?* An' I can't tell Pinch-a-Penny Peter an' have poor Tom Tulk throwed out o' the trade t' be laughed at from Twillingate Long Point t' the Cape Norman Light! I been sailin' with Tom Tulk for thirteen year. I've knowed Tom Tulk all my life. An' I'm *friends* with Tom Tulk.'

"An' poor little Jot-it-Down Jones put his face in his hands an' begun t' whimper.

"'Sure,' says I, 'he'll improve.'

"'No such thing!' says Jot-it-Down Jones. 'I've never knowed a timid skipper t' work a cure. An' I've seed this cursed thing come on men afore.'

"'Slow an' sure,' says I.

"'Slow enough!' says Jot-it-Down Jones. 'But I'd as lief sail with Davy Jones as a timid skipper. Both bound for the Locker, ecod! What's the worth of a timid skipper in a mess o' weather? An' that's what will happen t' Tom Tulk. That very thing! An' I don't want t' be there t' see it. Tom Tulk's a *friend* o' mine!'

"'Have he always been timid?'

"'A driver in his youth!'

"'Have he ever been cast away?' says I.

"'Tisn't that, Tumm.'

"'Then,' says I, 'what *is* it?'

"'What is it?' says Jot-it-Down Jones. 'Why, Tom Tulk's got a lad at Neck-o'-Land Bight t' fend for!'

"An' that was the trouble with ol' Tom Tulk! He had been a driver o' craft from his youth t' past middle age. He was knowed for a hard driver wherever he sailed. There was no sea that could scare un. An' he held that no wind that blowed could wreck a well-managed Newfoundland schooner. He had a fine flash o' the eye in a gale o' wind, they says; an' he had a little twitch o' laughter in tight places, an' always a word o' fun t' comfort the timid souls aboard. But his son died over at Neck-o'-Land Bight, leavin' an orphaned gran'child for Tom t' fend for; an' 'twas then that Tom Tulk begun t' change. He growed cautious. 'I can't afford t' take them long chances no more,' says he, 'with my little gran'child over at Neck-o'-Land Bight t' fend for.' A bit more cautious every season: an' more cautious still—an' yet a little more doubtful.

"'Twas all so slow that I 'low poor Tom

Tulk didn't see it hisself. I 'low he didn't know that caution would overcome un in the end.

"'Isn't no *sense* in takin' all them foolish risks,' says he. 'What's a name for courage, anyhow? What's the *use* of it?'

"An' nobody warned him o' what everybody seed. They jus' stood by, helpless, an' watched a blithe man yield t' wisdom an' be overcome. An' Tom Tulk turned by slow stages through the years into the shamed skipper that wouldn't put t' sea in a moderate spurt o' weather t' save his pride from the cackle of a cook.

"'I got my little lad t' fend for,' says he.

"An' thinks we, that's the end o' Tom Tulk! Which shows how no man can forecast another's future. Afore Tom Tulk departed he left a tale with more morals than one."

## VIII

### JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

"WE made Rickity Tickle in due season; an' there 'twas settled that I should sail another voyage with Jot-it-Down Jones. We loaded the *Call Again* with merchandise t' barter for the fish we had already bargained for. They was our fish. We had dealt out supplies t' needy folk on the promise that we should in fair trade have the fish they cotched. You'll mark this: the fish we had dealt for was ours. Jot-it-Down Jones swallowed his worry an' said nothin' t' Pinch-a-Penny Peter o' the skipper's peculiar behaviour at Poor Luck Tickle; an' Tom Tulk was in a blithesome mood when the *Call Again* kicked the waters o' Rickity Tickle behind her for the last time that summer an' pointed up for Candlestick Cove, bound thence t' Soap-an'-Water.

"'Goin' t' have my lad aboard, this cruise,' says he. 'I'll pick un up at Candlestick Cove.

He've been cravin' harsh sailin' an' a sight o' the north coast. I 'low I'm the b'y t' give un his fill o' *that!*'

"'Ay, sure!' says I. 'He'll enjoy it.'

"'A chirky lad, my young gran'son,' says he, 'an' bound t' see strange places, come what will. I 'low he'll be a comfort on the cruise.'

"'Well,' says I, 'maybe.'

"'You're but a wee lad yourself, Tumm,' says Skipper Tom, 'an' I hopes you'll be good t' my little feller.'

"'Me?' says I. 'That I will!'

"'He's a lad o' parts an' spirit, Tumm,' says he. 'You'll take a fancy to un right away.'

"A lad o' parts an' spirit? 'Twould surely make shame an' trouble for Skipper Tom t' have the lad aboard if evil weather once cotched us in sore need o' gettin' along; an' I wished in my heart that Skipper Tom had let the lad bide at home—for I never was no hand t' look upon shame an' ride easy. A chirky lad? An' bound t' see strange places? A lad o' parts an' spirit? A lad with no fear o' the sea? A great, tow-headed, tough-hearted youngster o' the outports, no doubt! An'

poor Skipper Tom! 'Twas a pity t' think o' what might happen. There'd surely be shame for us all in a pinch o' bad weather. An' as luck would have it 'twas a mornin' o' gray weather when us put into Candlestick Cove t' pick the lad up. The wind was comin' down from the nor'east with naughty intention. There was a black-an'-white sea jumpin' up; an' there was a drizzle o' rain, too, an' no comfort in the glass.

"I was glad enough when Jot-it-Down Jones 'lowed t' hang the *Call Again* down overnight. But 'twas less the weather that troubled Jot-it-Down Jones than the sight o' the *Dollar for Dollar* lyin' snug in Candlestick Cove: for she was a cutthroat cash-trader from the west coast, clerked by Long Jim Cook, a man without conscience in respect t' the fish. An' Jot-it-Down Jones jumped when he seed that craft, an' went sheer overboard in temper, an' cursed Jim Cook for a wrecker o' trade an' a thievin' cut-price an' pirate, gone too long in decent company, an' too long out o' jail; an' then he 'lowed that he'd pass the day ashore in search o' news, with a bottle t' loosen tongues, while Skipper Tom made over the neck o' land t' the

Bight, with what haste he could manage, an' fetched back his lad.

"Skipper Tom come aboard afore noon, with Jot-it-Down Jones still ashore, wieldin' his bottle in pursuit o' the news o' fish an' the intentions o' Long Jim Cook. I heared the punt scrape alongside, an' Skipper Tom's voice, then, all anxious an' gentle, motherin' his lad over the rail, in a way t' shame a lad o' spirit.

"'Give me your hand, lad,' says the skipper. 'Easy, easy! You'll manage. There! An' now you're aboard your gran'father's vessel. Is you all wore out?'

"'Twas no lusty youngster he had fetched aboard from Neck-o'-Land Bight. 'Twas a wan little chap with a withered leg, a brown head an' big brown eyes. An' he was ailin' sorely: he was white an' pinched an' all tired out with comin' over the road. Ah, well, he was jus' a doomed little mite, used t' limpin' about, an' used t' the care of his elders.

"'Your lad, Skipper Tom?' says I.

"'Ay,' says he. 'He've not very good health, Tumm, but the cruise will do un good. His mother's dead, an' his father's dead, an' I keeps un with strangers at Neck-o'-Land Bight, when

I'm afloat in the summer.' An' then off went the skipper for'ard, leavin' we two lads t'gether.

"'How old is you?' says I.

"'I'm but seven,' says he.

"'As for me,' says I, 'I'm fourteen. What's your name?'

"'Tulk.'

"'Ay, but your first name?'

"'Jack.'

"'After Cape John?' says I, t' tease un.

"'Oh, no! After Jack the Giant-Killer.'

"'Jack-the-Giant-Killer Tulk!' says I. ''Tis a brave name.'

"'My gran'father loves brave men.'

"'Was it for that he give you the name?'

"'Ay; t' live up to.'

"'Is you doin' it?'

"'I is.'

"'You got a wonderful bad cold,' says I.

"'Oh, that's nothin',' says he. 'I *always* got a cold.'

"'I'm glad 'tis in *your* head,' says I, 'an' not in *mine*.'

"''Tis not in my head,' says he. ''Tis deeper than that.'

"'How deep?'

"'Oh, I don't know,' says he. 'I s'pose 'tis down in the regions o' my stummick.'

"'Twas blowin' high outside—a nor'easter, too, workin' up t' the pitch of a gale, with three days o' spiteful conduct t' run. There was a white sea beyond the narrows, with a gray, drivin' sky overhead, an' a mist o' rain in the wind; an' 'twas no pleasant sight, believe me, from the deck o' the *Call Again*—not with the white horses gallopin' past the narrows. But Tom Tulk's lad stood lookin' at it with a grim little grin—as though 'twere nothin' more than a sight t' rouse the spirit of a man an' make un wish for conflict.

"'I'd like t' be out in *that!*' says he.

"'Well,' says I, 'you'll not be.'

"'Anyhow,' says he, 'I wisht I was. I—I—I'd *like* it! An' my gran'father would take me, too.'

"'So?' says I.

"'*That* wouldn't be nothin' t' *he!*'

"'Who tol' you so?'

"'My gran'father tol' me so. *He've* no fear o' nothin'. An' he've tol' me—many other things.'

"'Ay?'

"'Oh, sure! Winter nights ashore.'

"'Tis not hard for me, as I look back, t' tell what went on at Neck-o'-Land Bight in the winter nights when Tom Tulk was home from the sea. Winter nights ashore? Tales, t' be sure! An' tales o' crackin' on sail, an' lee shores, an' drivin', an' all sail set an' be hanged t' the consequences, an' Tom Tulk at the wheel every time! Winter nights ashore? The wind outside, an' the fire roarin', an' Tom Tulk an' the crippled little lad drawed close t' the kitchen stove, an' the lad hungry for tales, an' hunched up in his little chair with his eyes poppin' out with admiration, an' nobody about t' sneer at whatever wild yarn of his own courage Tom Tulk might take it into his deluded head t' tell! 'Tis easy enough t' understand that Tom Tulk, in from the sneers an' cocked glances o' the coast, an' the cackle o' the cook, an' the whimpers o' Jot-it-Down Jones, craved admiration, an' would yarn without fear an' t' good purpose, sea an' wind far off in the months t' come.

"But there's no profit in a lie—whether 'tis told with good intention or bad."

## IX

## A LEE SHORE

"PRESENTLY Skipper Tom come aft with an outfit for wet weather. There was a pair o' wee sea-boots an' a yellow oilskin jacket an' a sou'wester t' match. The schooner lay at anchor in flat water. No more than a mist o' rain was fallin': 'twould never get through the lad's warm reefer t' wet his skin. But the lad must have his oilskins on or go discontent. He pulled on his sea-boots, he slipped into his oilskin jacket, he clapped his sou'wester hard down on his curls; an' then he looked fore an' aft an' aloft an' out t' sea with his big brown eyes flashin' like a mail-boat captain's in foul weather. His jacket hid the small crook in his back; an' he so cleverly favoured his withered leg, by usin' the tip of his toe, that it looked as long an' as lusty as his sound one. A fine figure of a lad!—a mere mite of a boy, ill-fashioned, tender, ailin' sorely under his courage: but yet a lad with fine brave

eyes, an' with the love o' the sea in his heart, an' with a soul that no bugbear o' fear could daunt, an' with a body so managed that 'twas as straight an' as sound as new timber so far as a man could tell. He looked aloft again: he searched out the weather signs an' felt the wind an' watched the white horses run past the tickle t' Candlestick Cove. An' thereafter—whilst his white little face was thin an' grim an' keen under his sou'wester—an' whilst the lights o' delight shone in his big brown eyes—an' whilst big sea-talk fell from his lips as from the bearded mouths o' the crack Labrador skippers he had met in his life—there was no tellin' whether he was at play or in earnest.

"'Hum!' says the Giant-Killer. 'Blowin' up.'

"You'd think un a man grown. Ecod, yes! His wee voice was gone down in his throat; an' he was fair scowlin' vast knowledge o' the sea.

"I grinned.

"'Ay,' says Skipper Tom, grinnin', too; 'a gale o' wind outside.'

"'Gale o' wind?' the lad scoffed. 'Pshaw! Nothin' but a sailin' breeze!'

"'Some slap to it,' says I.

"'Pst! Why, Tumm, I'd take the punt out in *this*.'

"'She'll blow higher,' says the skipper.

"'Ay, maybe. Let's hope so. Nothin' like a gale o' wind for gettin' along. What's the next port o' call, sir?'

"'Soap-an'-Water.'

"'Ha! So? She'll have a rough passage across the bay if the wind holds. You got a stout craft here, sir?'

"'Stout enough.'

"'Got any heels?'

"'Heels enough t' show the *Dollar for Dollar* her stern if she had the mind t' use un.'

"The *Dollar for Dollar* was lyin' near by. That cutthroat tradin' pirate! The lad looked her over. 'I believes you,' says he.

"'Oh, no trouble at all,' says Skipper Tom, 'for the *Call Again* t' run away from that wash-tub!'

"'Hum!' says the lad. 'And the *Call Again* looks it. She've swift lines. I'd like t' know what she can do in half a gale o' wind. I wisht we was goin' out.'

"'Me, too,' says Skipper Tom.

"The lad put both hands on Skipper Tom's

shoulders an' looked the ol' man in the eyes. 'Ah, gran'pop,' says he, 'you're a driver!'

"'Well,' says Tom, 'I likes a breeze o' wind when I'm in a hurry.'

"'You're a driver!'

"'Oh, no,' says Tom. 'I wouldn't call myself that.'

"'Yes, you is!'

"'Well, well,' says Tom, 'I'll admit that I isn't overly fond o' weather that's too civil.'

"'You're a driver when you've any excuse!'

"Tom now put his hands on the lad's wee shoulders. 'Anyhow,' says he, with a laugh an' a jolly wink, 'what's blowin' outside is jus' t' my taste an' I'd like t' have you out in it.'

"'Then why not put out?'

"'I'd *love* to, lad!'

"'What's the sense o' stayin' here?'

"The skipper begun t' fidget. 'Oh,' says he, 'there's good reasons.'

"'Lyin' here we're losin' time!'

"'Isn't none o' *my* business,' says the skipper. 'Lyin' in harbour I takes my orders from the clerk. An' that's Jot-it-Down Jones. An' Jot-it-Down Jones is ashore for the night by the

looks o' things. 'Tis only when we're at sea that I'm sole master o' this craft.'

"'Ha!' says the lad. 'If I was the clerk o' this here tradin' schooner she'd not lie like a log in Candlestick Cove when she had business at Soap-an'-Water.'

"Skipper Tom got up with a wry face. 'Tumm,' says he, 'you look after the lad. I got a bit of a job for'ard.'

"An' then Skipper Tom went for'ard. An' though I loved Skipper Tom like a son I was disgusted. An' I was ashamed—an' I was afraid o' the shame that was comin' down on us all with the first gale o' wind that cotched us out o' harbour or cotched us in harbour with the need o' puttin' t' sea. . . . An' the weather would be sure t' cotch us. There's no dodgin' the troubles o' the sea on this coast. A man must face un as they comes. An' a man must upon all occasions make the best of a bad job or go shamed ashore. . . . An' here was Tom Tulk lyin' like a three-year-old! A coward's lie! A coward's boast t' win love an' praise! Man, I was sick at heart with fear o' the hour when that lie should fall down

like a mountain an' crush Tom Tulk. . . . But you'll bear in mind that I'm not talkin' now of the Tom Tulk that was cast away at the ice when the *Blue Streak* scraped past the Blueblack Shoals in the dark afore dawn—not of the Tom Tulk that faced the seas on a pan of ice somewhere between Mother Burke o' Cape John an' the last rocks o' Newf'un'land—not of the Tom Tulk that was carried blind as a bat t' the cottage by Blow-Me of Rickity Tickle an' vowed he would smell his way through life if he couldn't see it—not of the Tom Tulk that was bound an' determined t' leave a tale with a moral behind as legacy for the coast he was born on. I'm talkin' now o' the Tom Tulk that was made cautious by havin' a lad t' fend for an' then turned coward on his own account.

"An' you'll bear this in mind, too: that the tale o' Tom Tulk goes on beyond this shameful time t' the fogs off Bread-an'-Butter. . . .

"'Tumm,' says the Giant-Killer, 'I'll take the wheel. Go for'ard an' keep a lookout. An' a sharp one,' says he, 'ye bay-noddie!'

"I was not loath t' play. 'Ay, sir,' says I.

"'We're off the Harbourless Shore.'

"'Ay, sir.'

"'We're beatin' t' the s'uth'ard, d'ye hear?'

"'Ay, sir.'

"'There's rocks dead ahead in the mist.'

"'Ay.'

"'Cock your ears for breakers,' says he.

"Seven year old!—but a wonderful hand t' make believe. 'Twas all real t' he. The wind was in the riggin': 'twas enough t' make a man think o' the scream o' the gale in the open. The swish o' the sea an' the rumble o' breakers come in from beyond the Candlestick Tickle; an' the rain—a black shower in the wind—went peltin' past. An' there stood the Giant-Killer, his wee hands grippin' the wheel, his little legs spread wide as if against the tumble o' the schooner, his sou'wester pulled down, his eyes blinkin' in the rain an' his thin cheeks flushed an' wet as he stared ahead. I'm not knowin' what his brown eyes seed in fancy: a black fog, no doubt, with cliffs lurkin' deadly in the mist; an' I'm sure that for he a wild gale o' fall weather was blowin' an' that the sea was all tumultuous an' white. 'Twas so for me, too. I had the power o' fancy, so well as

he. I have it still. An' I was then but a lad an' glad t' play at sailin' up the Harbourless Shore o' the Labrador. An' when I seed the wee feller, there at the wheel, braced an' grim, the rocks an' rippled black water o' Candlestick Cove vanished; an' in their place come the wide white sea, an' the schooner was lyin' no longer at anchor in snug harbour, but was drivin' through the fog, heeled t' the gale an' smothered in white water. An' the Giant-Killer scowled like a swilein' (sealing) captain on his bridge; an' it struck me, I mind, that if I fell short in my duty the little skipper would know the reason why.

"'Where's your ears?' he roared.

"'Ay, sir,' says I. 'Yes, sir.'

"'I hears breakers, ye blockhead!'

"'Hard-a-lee!' I sung out.

"He spun the wheel. 'An' jus' in time, ye dunderhead!' he yelled. 'Another ten fathom an' she'd have been ashore.'

"I laughed.

"'Ah, Tumm, b'y,' says he, laughin', too, 'I loves t' play. You didn't mind my swearin', did you?'

"'Me?' says I. 'Naw!'

"'I jus' couldn't help it,' says he, 'an' I'm glad I didn't vex you.'

"'Pshaw!' says I. 'A little feller like *you* couldn't vex *me!*'

"He dropped the wheel. 'As for me,' says he, between his teeth, 'I'll skipper a Labrador-man when *I* grows up.'

"'A good job, b'y!'

"He sighed. 'If ever I grows up at all,' says he.

"An' then something happened that made my heart beat with the fear o' grief an' shame."

## X

## TO SEA

"'ECOD!' says the lad. '*Dollar for Dollar* is bound out!'

"'I 'low not,' says I, jumpin' around. 'Not in this blow.'

"'They're makin' sail, b'y!'

"An' they was! An' they was scurryin' about the deck with vast laughter, too, an' saucy glances our way.

"'Us'll go out!' says the Giant-Killer.

"'Well, no,' says I. '*Us*—won't.'

"The lad grinned. 'My gran'father'll take she out,' says he. 'He's a wonderful hand t' drive a schooner when he've any good excuse. You jus' wait an' see.'

"Jot-it-Down Jones come aboard, then, with his hair on end. He was in too much of a rage t' do much but splutter. But he was not touched with drink, at all, for he kep' his rum for his rivals. He come bowlin' down aft on the skipper an' the lad an' me in a way that meant put t' sea an' need o' haste. When he

seed the lad he stopped an' fair throwed up his hands in despair. An' then he come on again, his face all screwed with worry.

"'Long Jim Cook's bound over t' Soap-an'-Water t' get my fish,' says he, spoutin' his news as he come down the deck.

"'Ay?' says the skipper. 'Well, well!'

"'They've had a run o' fish at Soap-an'-Water, d'ye hear?—an' a spurt o' sunshine; an' the fish is all dry in the stages. I can't keep Long Jim Cook in harbour by hook or crook. An' he says he'll pay cash an' cut prices t' rags t' get my fish.' By this time poor Jot-it-Down Jones had Skipper Tom by the coat; an' his voice was gone to a whimper, an' he was lookin' the skipper fair in the eyes, while the skipper peered back through little slits, with his head drawed away. 'Tom, ol' friend,' says he, 'this here gale is good for three days when she sets in. An' Long Jim Cook vows t' get over t' Soap-an'-Water afore she closes down. Ah, now, Tom, you wouldn't—you couldn't——'

"''Tis no fit time t' put t' sea,' says Skipper Tom.

"'No fit time!' cries Jot-it-Down. 'An' there goes the mains'l o' the *Dollar for Dollar!*'

"'Tis sheer folly t' drive a schooner t' Soap-an'-Water in a breeze o' wind like this.'

"Jot-it-Down Jones gulped back an oath with disgust. 'Know what Long Jim Cook says about me?' says he.

"'Well, no,' says the skipper, 'I doesn't.'

"'Says I isn't got the nerve t' go out.'

"'Well, well!' says the skipper. 'Do he, now?'

"Jot-it-Down Jones begun t' dance with rage an' hopelessness. 'Know what he says about *you?*' says he.

"'Mm?' says the skipper, with a little jerk.

"'He says you're too big a coward t' put t' sea in half the wind that blows.'

"'Well, well!'

"'A coward! D'ye hear?'

"'Hm-m-m!' says the skipper. 'That's saucy.'

"'An' now,' says the clerk, 'what *you* got t' say?'

"'All I got t' say is,' says Skipper Tom, 'that he's a liar. An' us isn't got much time t' lose,' says he, 'if we're t' make Soap-an'-Water afore the night falls down.'"

## XI

## THE WAY TO SOAP-AN'-WATER

"WITH all sail on but the tops'l, an' no reefs t' beg for grace, us got the *Call Again* out o' Candlestick Cove in the wake o' the *Dollar for Dollar*, which carried such sail as we t' the inch. An' then the schooner lay over t' the slap o' the gale, the wind abeam. With her head up for Soap-an'-Water, as near as Skipper Tom could reckon in the rain, she nosed along through the big white seas as if she liked the taste an' smell o' salt spray. It done Skipper Tom a world o' good t' be out in the thick of it instead o' skulkin' in harbour. It done the ol' feller good t' have his hands on the wheel an' t' stand braced like a man against the tumble of his own vessel. He was chirky enough, an' chuckled a bit; an' he kep' 'lowin' all the time that the schooner done very well, for the sea that was runnin', an' that his gran'son would be a wonderful comfort on the cruise.

"'Keeps a man up to his labour,' says he, 't' have his own little lad aboard.'

"But the Giant-Killer hisself went below, by an' by. This was when his withered leg complained—an' when the wind had begun t' bite through his reefer—an' when he'd chuckled hisself out o' laughter—an' when he had had his fill o' the lurch o' the schooner an' the sight o' the white-horses comin' over the bows. But he left the companion hatch wide open, an' stretched out on Jot-it-Down Jones's counter, with a bolt o' calico for pillow, where he still had a glimpse o' Skipper Tom at the wheel. An' he lay there at rest an' happy, one tale o' the sea, at least, come true for he. From time t' time he would crawl up t' take a squint at the *Dollar for Dollar*, tossin' along through the smother t' win'ard, neck an' neck with the ol' *Call Again;* an' then he would look Skipper Tom over, glee in his eyes, an' then he would chuckle an' go below to his counter an' calico.

"'Twas blowin' high enough for comfort by this time. The wind was still risin'. Up an' up it come with every squall. The bigger seas fair smothered the schooner as they run past t'

go t' thunderin' smash on the coast in the drizzle o' rain t' le'ward. An' 'tis this that breaks the heart of a timid man: harbour t' make in haste from the weather—an' wind an' sea comin' up, as if with a sullen mind t' hinder—an' the schooner heelin' lower an' lower t' the squalls, tired out—an' the waves smashin' down, forever faster an' heavier. The mind of a timid man jumps on, in fear, t' what *might* happen at sea afore he can make some shelter o' the hills. There *might* come a sea in mountains—such as a man sees in dreams—an' there *might* come a wind fit an' able t' rip a vessel fair out o' the water.

"I 'lowed Skipper Tom wouldn't hang on t' the end. Not with the wind jumpin'—not with day worn on—not with whisps o' fog abroad—not with the way t' Soap-an'-Water a lather o' reefs an' broken seas in nor'easterly gales! When I cotched little Jot-it-Down Jones, gloomin' amidships in the rain, with his face scrunched up, I said so.

"'I'm waitin',' he bawled.

"'He'll break afore long!'

"'I'm jus' waitin'.'

"'There's signs,' says I.

"'Ay,' says he, with his hands for a funnel

against the wind; 'he'll want t' run t' Neighbourly Cove for harbour. Oh, I knows un! An' I'm waitin'.'

"'Tis a fear within reason,' says I. '*I'm* scared enough.'

"'Reason?' says the clerk. 'Huh! Reason's not *my* master!' An' he looked off t' the *Dollar for Dollar*. He glanced aloft an' scowled. 'If Tom Tulk would spread that tops'l,' says he, 'he could make Soap-an'-Water easy enough.'

"'Ay,' says I; 'but that tops'l will stay dry.'

"'We'll make Soap-an'-Water Harbour this night,' says Jot-it-Down Jones, 'or she'll sink—an' be damned to her!'

"'Does you mean it?'

"'Mean it?' says he. 'Think I'm goin' t' let Long Jim Cook have my fish while we harbours at Neighbourly Cove?'

"'Skipper Tom will have a word t' say.'

"'Skipper Tom,' says he, 'isn't got *nothin'* t' say on this passage.'

"'Dear man! What you goin' t' do?'

"'You wait,' says he, 'until Tom Tulk tries it on.'

"It looked as if Skipper Tom might try it on very soon. There was signs. Even a lad learns t' read un—at sea; an' I had knocked around the coast, young as I was. The weather was such as t' scare little schooners t' harbour like rabbits. Sixty tons, an' no more! 'Twas a mighty sea for we, without reefs; an' the sea was jumpin' up, all the time, an' night was runnin' down from the east t' cotch us in the open.

"'An' night will do it, too,' thinks I, 'afore we pass the reefs off Soap-an'-Water.'

"Skipper Tom was peerin' all around—t' win'ard, where the *Dollar for Dollar* was makin' desperate weather of it—an' far ahead, t' the misty line o' shore where Soap-an'-Water lay—an' t' le'ward, where Neighbourly Cove was waitin' with arms out t' harbour us in snug water. His face was all twisted with worry, an' his eyes had gone back in his head, t' flare out from black sockets; an' he'd cotch his breath, an' mumble, an' start, an' grit his teeth, when he thought nobody was lookin' t' see. But he'd grip his courage when the wee little Giant-Killer crawled up t' see how she was doin'. I could fair see un take a new hold.

An' after that, for a bit, he'd hang on with more comfort.

"'Twas the sight o' the *Dollar for Dollar* that put his courage overside, at last. She was makin' sad labour o' the sea. She was now fair on her beam ends—now smothered in white water—now lost t' sight in a black squall o' rain—now lifted by a big sea an' flung over as if she'd never live t' raise her head again. 'Twas no comfort t' Skipper Tom t' watch her an' know that his own plight was the same. An' by an' by he could stand it no longer, but give in to his fears, an' called me aft.

"'Call the clerk,' says he.

"I took one look—an' seed quite enough. An' I went amidships for Jot-it-Down Jones."

## XII

### "CRACK ON!"

"JOT-IT-DOWN JONES was waitin'.

'Have it come?' says he.

"'No question.'

"'Here goes,' says he, 'whatever happens. There'll be a pother o' trouble an' shame either way.' An' he went off aft in the devil's own temper. 'Well?' says he, with a snap, t' poor Tom Tulk.

"'I'm 'lowin' t' run for Neighbourly Cove.'

"'I don't see Jim Cook turnin' tail.'

"'He'll be cast away!'

"Jot-it-Down Jones made sure, then, that Skipper Tom would hear un. He got t' win'ard an' went close. 'You're goin' right on t' Soap-an'-Water,' says he, 'an' be damned t' you!' An' Skipper Tom knowed that the clerk meant it when he looked t' see: for the clerk had his eyes all ready t' drive the words home.

"'She'll never make it,' says the skipper.

"'Then she'll sink!'

"Skipper Tom didn't move a muscle. He jus' waited—until he understood. An' I 'low it took time for the clerk's big words t' get in. 'What you goin' t' do,' says the skipper, 'when I bears away for Neighbourly Cove?'

"'I'll call the crew,' says Jot-it-Down Jones, 'an' take you from the wheel.'

"'You know what that means?'

"'I don't care a squid what it means. Long Jim Cook isn't goin' t' get my fish. You change the course o' this here schooner so long as Jim Cook holds on an' I'll show you quick enough what I'll do.'

"'Well, well!' says the skipper. 'Well, well!'

"'You hear *me?*'

"'Anyhow,' says the skipper, 'I'll bear away t' Neighbourly Cove for harbour.'

"An' he was jus' about t' do it, too—an' Jot-it-Down Jones was jus' about t' start for'ard t' get the crew for this dogs' affair—an' I was jus' about t' jump on Jot-it-Down Jones an' beg un not t' shame a man afore his own little lad—when the Giant-Killer poked his head out o' the cabin hatch an' crawled on deck t' see how the *Dollar for Dollar* was doin'.

"Well, the *Dollar for Dollar* was doin' well enough. She had drawed ahead. An' she was buckled down to her labour with a good heart for a hard task. I'm not knowin' what the lad heard as he lay below. I'm hopin', God knows, that he heard never a word! But whatever an' all about that, he fetched us all to a stop in our tracks an' intentions. An' he turned on his gran'father. In wonder—ay, an' in grief! In shame—in doubt, it may be—an' in question! Skipper Tom's lie was down at last. Tales ashore isn't deeds at sea. An' with Jot-it-Down Jones minded as he was—an' with Tom Tulk's courage gone overside for good—an' with the child's heart t' be broken as his faith was destroyed—'twas all horrible t' see an' t' feel.

"The lad clenched his hands, an' gritted his teeth, an' stared straight into his gran'father's eyes, in a passion t' match the rage o' Jot-it-Down Jones hisself. Skipper Tom stared back. Jot-it-Down Jones laughed—a dry cackle without laughter. An' I laughed, too, in dread an' bitterness. 'Twas such laughter as the sight o' pain jerks out. For we knowed what was goin' t' happen.

"THE DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR WAS DOIN' WELL ENOUGH"

"'Crack on!' says the lad.

"Skipper Tom's jaw dropped; he gurgled in a dry throat—an' stood froze t' the wheel.

"'What's the matter 'ith you, gran'pop? *Crack on!*'

"Skipper Tom laughed—with pride in the lad, maybe, or with sheer joy in his comical rage. I don't know. He laughed, anyhow—an' 'twas a vast guffaw. An' laughter is medicine for the nerves of a man.

"'For'ard, there, you!' he bawled.

"Up went his head. The watch jumped t' hear the new ring in his voice.

"'Shake out that damned tops'l,' he sung out, 'an' we'll see what this ol' basket has t' say about gettin' t' Soap-an'-Water afore the night falls down!'

"Well, well, the ol' *Call Again* jumped as if she'd been whipped. Off she slid on her beam for Soap-an'-Water—fair jumpin' from sea t' sea an' forever in a smother o' spray. An' the *Dollar for Dollar* broke her heart. No tops'l there! She fell away from the course an' turned off with the wind for Neighbourly Cove. The *Call Again* hauled down the soapy reefs off the narrows t' Soap-an'-

Water in a gather o' dusk, with fog creepin' round Ghost's Head o' the Cape. 'Twas fearful sailin', then. There was a chatter o' prayers in every man's heart as the *Call Again* chose black water from the lather o' that place. But the skipper took her in, as easy as you likes; an' down come the sails—an' down went the anchor—an' Skipper Tom laughed again when he took his hands from the wheel.

"Grand times in the for'c's'le that night! A warm fire in the bogey-stove! A grand scoff o' food an' a kettle o' the best tea in Jot-it-Down's store! An' talk o' fish an' sailin'—an' a ballad or two—an' a tale or more—an' roars o' foolish laughter! I'm not sure that poor Jot-it-Down Jones didn't shed tears, by times; but I does know that he couldn't come near ol' Tom Tulk without puttin' a hand on his shoulder; an' I'll bet a whale to a squid that Skipper Tom hadn't no objections t' that. An' by an' by Skipper Tom gathered up his crippled lad—all tired out, that lad, but wonderful happy—an' took the little feller aft t' stow un away. Master Giant-Killer had said never a word in praise o' Tom Tulk, except with his big brown

eyes; but now what he said come down the for'c's'le hatch from the black deck.

"'Gee, gran'pop!' says he; 'you—you—you're a driver when you've any excuse!'

"It seemed then that Tom shifted the lad from one arm t' the other.

"'Ouch!' says the boy.

"'In pain?' says Tom.

"'Jus' my ol' legs an' back.'

"'I'm wonderful sorry,' says Tom.

"'Oh, well, gran'pop,' says the Giant-Killer, 'I got t' make the best of a bad job!'

"'The best of a bad job?' says Tom. 'Ah, lad, 'tis as good as a prayer!'

"An' that," Tumm concluded, "is where ol' Tom Tulk got his first touch o' religion."

A good place, too!

## XIII

### WINGS O' THE WIND

NOTHING loath, old Tumm, as a usual thing, to yarn of a black night in the fall of the year !—but now strangely reluctant to tell of what presently befell old Tom Tulk of Rickity Tickle. And the tale turned out—as any man might foresee—to be the tale of a singular conversion : a conversion from fear and complaint to that selfsame astonishing courage which had enabled the old fellow to jest with the gigantic misfortune of his blindness—whilst he made the best of it. It was at Ginger Tickle of the Labrador that Tumm resumed the yarn. The *Quick as Wink* was then hung up. There was ice in the Straits of Belle Isle—vagrant bergs, drifted in from the outer current with a stout wind from the northeast ; and a vast bank of black fog lay over sea and ice and the rocks of all that shore. It was no time for the schooner to be out of harbour : it was a time for safe anchor-

age and a fire in the forecastle bogey-stove. Time for yarns, too: time for the sort of yarn old Tumm had to spin. A drear night: a drip-drip of cold rain falling from the fog—and the waters of harbour black and fretful.

Tumm proceeded reluctantly to the tale of the quaint little death that the Giant-Killer had died at Neck-o'-Land Bight. . . .

"Well, now, lads, we got our fish at Soap-an'-Water, an' we got our fish in all the ports of the Shore; an' we was bound up t' Rickity Tickle, loaded, when we fell foul o' two troubles: Skipper Tom scraped the *Call Again* on Turtle-Back Rock o' Candlestick Cove an' Jack the Giant-Killer fell ill of a hemorrhage. There was cure for the *Call Again:* there was none for the wee lad. So Jot-it-Down Jones reckoned that he could haul the schooner down an' caulk her without Skipper Tom's help whilst Skipper Tom carried the little feller over the roads t' Neck-o'-Land Bight an' bided there with un until he should need neither help nor company no more. 'You stay so long as you likes,' says Jot-it-Down Jones. 'If you're not —well—if you're not—quite through—when

I'm ready t' put out,' says he, 'I'll sail without a skipper until you're—well, until you *is*—quite through.' An' so 'twas arranged: Jot-it-Down Jones an' the crew turned t' work on the *Call Again*, in no haste, at all, but jus' loafin' along, an' Skipper Tom an' me took the wan little Giant-Killer through that drear weather t' the cottage at Neck-o'-Land Bight where they had lived alone together through the winter months of all them years.

"It tired the Giant-Killer t' be carried over the roads. Such a little journey—an' all so softly done! Ay, it wore the lad out. Tender as ol' Tom Tulk was with un, 'twas still a wearisome time: for the way from Candlestick Cove t' Neck-o'-Land Bight is soggy an' rough. Tom Tulk said never a word by the way: nor I. Tom jus' pounded along with his burden, his face gone white an' grim. There was times, goin' over the rocks, when I made sure that the wee feller would sing out 'Ouch!' But not he! There was never a grumble. 'Easy does it, gran'pop!' says he. 'You is doin' *fine*. Don't trouble. Us'll soon be there. An' as for *me*,' says he, 'why, *I'm* ridin' easy enough!' An' all the time, as I knowed from

the set of his lips an' the lights in his big brown eyes, there was woeful pain in the Giant-Killer's back an' legs. I 'low that ol' Tom knowed it, too: for ol' Tom pounded on an' on, grim an' still, through the marshes an' over the rocky hills, bound t' make harbour with his lad so soon as he was able. 'Don't you fret about *me*, gran'pop,' says the lad. 'There isn't nothin' much the matter 'ith me, here in your arms. *I'm* makin' fine weather of it!' An' that was jus' like the Giant-Killer, too: somehow or other there never was nothin' much the matter with he—so far as another could tell. 'Twas always: 'Oh, *I'm* all right! Nothin' much the matter 'ith *me!*'

"'Twas near nightfall afore we come t' Neck-o'-Land Bight. A sou'easter brewin', then. The wind was comin' in from the open —a mean harbour, that—an' it piled the seas up on the rocks an' beat upon the houses in a way t' shake their very bones. I wondered what happened in the bight when the winter gales broke upon it. Ecod, 'twas a wind-swept place! It seemed t' me that there might come a time when the wind would lay hands on

Tom Tulk's cottage an' fly away with it. An' I was glad when Skipper Tom had the cottage warm an' bright with fire an' I could carry the Giant-Killer from the fog an' wind o' night into that pleasant place. Skipper Tom lost no time; he was quick as a mother with the task: all in a flash he had the Giant-Killer stripped an' stowed away in his cot an' tucked in. 'Twas a performance they went through. 'I'm bein' made shipshape for the night,' says the lad. An' then off went the skipper t' the kitchen t' brew a cup o' tea t' warm the lad's marrow. Nobody thought o' doctors: there was no doctors on our coast in them days; an' there was nothin' for we t' do but jus' wait until the little feller got ready t' slip his cable an' put out on the long cruise. An' I waited there by the cot —an' brooded, in fear for my own soul, upon the queer thing that would presently befall the poor lad. What was that thing? Where was he bound for? I was young: I wondered. An' I was sad an' I was afraid.

"'Hark t' the wind!' says he.

"'Blowin' up, lad.'

"'Ay, blowin' up. But, oh, Tumm, b'y, you should hear the winter winds go by! Ah,

that's fine! 'Tis a wonderful hurry they're in sometimes. An' somehow or other they wants t' take everything with un t' the places where they're goin'. They clutch an' pull. They seem not content t' leave anything behind. Man, I've listened often to un scootin' by! Where do they come from, Tumm?'

"'What, lad?'

"'The big winds, b'y.'

"'Sea an' shore,' says I.

"'An' where do they go?' says he.

"'Sea an' shore.'

"'No, no!' says he. 'They never goes back t' where they comes from. They keeps on goin'—on an' on an' on. They never stops. Where do they go, Tumm—where do they go?'

"'The ends o' the earth.'

"'Oh, no! That's not far enough. They goes on—away beyond.'

"'I don't know,' says I. 'Tis queer.'

"'An' why do they pull so? That's queerer still. They're forever at it. It makes a body think that there's something grand beyond. They lay hands on me, Tumm; an' they seem t' say, "Come on! Come on! Come on along o' we!" An' when I'm not without, but lyin'

here within, 'tis jus' the same. I can feel un grip the house—an' pull an' pull. Somehow or other it jus' seems as if they wants me t' be off with them. I wonder what they wants!'

"'I don't know,' says I.

"'Tis a fancy with me, Tumm,' says he, smilin', 'that I'll go away with the wind some day. An' somehow or other I thinks—I'd kind o' like to.'

"'But why?' says I.

"'I don't know,' says he. 'Tis mere fancy. I 'low 'tis because the wind goes so very far away an' sees such strange places.'"

## XIV

### MISFIT

"SKIPPER TOM come in, then, with the tea. 'Well, well, gran'pop!' says the Giant-Killer, 'I've had my cruise. Eh, gran'pop? Dear man! *I've had my cruise!*'

"'Down north,' says Tom.

"'Down north, true enough,' says the Giant-Killer. 'An' here I is back again all safe an' sound. Well, well! Dear man!'

"'There'll be another cruise,' says the skipper, t' hearten the lad.

"'Another cruise?'

"'Ay, sure, lad!'

"'On'y one more cruise, gran'pop?'

"Then all at once both seed some meanin' in this that neither had intended. Another cruise? But one more cruise? Ay, jus' one more cruise—as far an' strange as the ends o' time an' space. An' Skipper Tom turned away: I'm not sure that he didn't cry—jus' a li'l' bit.

"'Oh, well, anyhow,' says the Giant-Killer,

'I've seed Mother Burke o' Cape John. An' I've seed the Cape Norman light. An' I've crossed the Straits. An' I've had a look at the Labrador. An' I've traded the ports o' the French Shore. An' there isn't a man o' Neck-o'-Land Bight can yarn about down north no more without *my* knowin' all about it. For, look you!—*I been down north!*' An' then his eyes opened wide with the wonder o' the thing. 'Well, well!' says he. 'Dear man! I been off on a bit of a cruise down north. *Me!*' He sighed. 'But somehow or other,' says he, 'I'm wonderful glad t' be back in bed again.'

"'You'll rest well,' says Skipper Tom.

"'Ay, maybe.'

"'An', poor lad,' says the skipper, 'you *needs* rest.'

"'Somehow or other,' says the lad, as if 'twere a marvel, 'I—I—I *is* tired!'

"'Is you never been tired afore?' says I.

"'Oh, ay!' says he. 'But not jus' quite like this. My legs is often been tired an' my back is often been tired. Both my legs an' my back is often been tired in several different ways. I'm used t' *that*. But now I'm tired sort of all over. Somehow or other I'm tired *inside!*'

"'No wonder,' says I. 'Sure, there isn't no comfort in a fo'c's'le.'

"'Oh, ay!' says he. 'Dear man, why, there's *plenty* o' comfort in a fo'c's'le! Sure, if a man can't be comfortable in the fo'c's'le o' the *Call Again* where *can* he be comfortable? There's but one better place in all the world.'

"'Ay?'

"'The deck, b'y!'

"'Ay?'

"'When the wind's a gale from the nor'east an' a man haves his last rag spread. Ah, but that's *fine!* An' *I* knows how it feels!'

"'But 'tis no fit weather ——'

"'Oh, no, Tumm!' says he. 'I knows that well enough. Somehow or other the like o' that is not for the likes o' me. Somehow or other I—I—I jus' got t' keep right on makin' the best of a bad job.'

"True enough, indeed! An' sad enough. An' common enough, too. An' a puzzle that no man can solve. But who shall blame? An' who shall place the blame? Who understands? 'Twould take more wisdom than the world contains t' prove that the little Giant-Killer would have been better off—an' that the world would

have been none the worse—had his wishes for ships an' the sea come true. The older I grows —an' the more I learns of the end o' many paths that seem fair enough t' tread—the less I likes t' call This good an' That evil. It may be well enough that the fairest luck a man can have in life is the good job o' makin' the best of a bad one."

Tumm laughed at his own foolish philosophy. . .

## XV

### WEIGHING ANCHOR

"IN them old days at Neck-o'-Land Bight, as elsewhere in the world," the clerk went on, "they used t' listen for the last words o' the dyin'. Was the death triumphant? Or was it, God help us all!—was it not? 'Twas a simple place: 'twas far out o' the world—out o' the world even of this coast. 'Tis even now much like it used t' be, long, long ago, when the forebears o' the folk first settled there t' fish. What should change it? An' I mind well the time when Solomon Junk o' Neck-o'-Land Bight lost his third wife. A shrew, she! I've no doubt that Solomon Junk was glad enough t' be rid of her for good an' all. At the end she said nothin' at all. An' 'twas like her t' be perverse. Nar a word! They listened. But there was never a sign o' repentance or fear or hope. Solomon Junk's third wife jus' lay grim an' silent on her bed until the last spark o' life went out. I've

thought many a time that the old woman was a shrew t' the last. She'd give nobody no satisfaction. She'd bewilder un all. An' so here was a wonderful puzzle for the parson o' that time! Solomon Junk's third wife was a church-member an' a regular attendant. But she had given no witness at the last. Had she died in hope—or had she not? Who could tell? An' what was the parson t' say on Sunday evenin'?

"Bein' a wise man the parson said a deal about death an' judgment an' nothin' about Solomon Junk's third wife until his sermon was preached through t' the end.

"'Solomon Junk,' says he, 'stand up.'

"Skipper Solomon stood up an' waited for the worst that could happen.

"'Skipper Solomon,' says the parson, 'how do you say, is there hope for the departed?'

"'Well, sir,' says Skipper Solomon, 'I don't know.'

"'Accordin' t' your knowledge o' the Scriptures an' your acquaintance with your wife,' says the parson, 'how say you?'

"'Well, sir, accordin' t' my knowledge o' the Scriptures, an' 'specially accordin' t' my

acquaintance with my wife, sir,' says Skipper Solomon, 'I should say, sir, that the departed hasn't got no hope.'

"An' so they damned the poor woman for good an' all. . . . Nobody booted Skipper Solomon. An' I've never been told that anybody booted the parson. . . . A queer tale, eh? But true. . . .

"Ah, well! 'Twas ordained that the little Giant-Killer should die. You knows that well enough without my tellin' it. Aboard the *Call Again* he had been only a poor doomed little mite makin' the best of a bad job. An' now, lyin' there in his cot at Neck-o'-Land Bight, he begun t' wilt like a leaf in the first frosts o' fall. But he was not troubled at all. '*I* doesn't mind it,' says he. 'Why, goodness, I *likes* t' lie here like this!' Maybe he didn't notice that he was failin' fast. He was so used t' makin' the best of a bad job—so used t' pain an' weakness—that he give that sort o' thing scant attention. 'Twas not the worst that he considered: 'twas always the best. An' the best that was his portion then was a wonderful great store o' love an' care. He was only a

child. Ecod! he was not much more than a baby in years. But a child with a bad back an' bad legs grows fast in other ways than age. An' the little Giant-Killer, child that he was, lived out his life t' the end with the courage of a prophet. 'I'm wonderful comfortable, here with you an' Tumm, gran'pop,' says he. '*I'm* all right. I'm glad t' have you home. An' I'm glad t' have a friend—like Tumm: for I never had a friend afore. Why, I'm havin' a *wonderful* grand time, gran'pop, lyin' sick here in bed!'

"'Twas Tom Tulk an' the parson from Candlestick Cove that told the lad that he was t' die. Tom Tulk didn't want t' have un told. Tom Tulk wanted t' have the lad slip his cable without knowin' a thing about it—wanted t' have un lie in peace where he was an' put out at last like a man jus' fallin' asleep.

"'What's the use o' tellin' him?' says he. 'He don't need t' be told.'

"But the neighbours insisted.

"'Damme!' says Tom; 'he've made the best of a bad job all his life long an' there isn't no terrors in store for he. Dear God!' says Tom;

'there can't be no punishments laid up for a little lad like he!'

"'If you're feelin' that way about it,' says the neighbours, 'you better call in a parson.'

"'What for?' says Tom.

"'T' ease the lad off.'

"'Dear man!' says Tom; 'he's ridin' *perfectly* easy.'

"'Ah, well, you've your own soul t' save.'

"'I isn't *thinkin'* about my own soul.'

"''Tis time t' think about the lad's poor soul. 'Twould be no credit t' you if he lost it.'

"'But he *can't* lose it!'

"'Skipper Thomas,' says they, 'go fetch a parson.'

"'Hang the parson!' says Tom.

"Jus' the same, what the neighbours said about death, an' about original sin an' the judgment, got Tom t' worryin'. An' I got t' worryin', too. 'It can't do no harm anyhow,' says I. 'You better get a parson, Skipper Tom. There isn't a parson in the world that can scare *that* lad!' An' by an' by Skipper Tom went over t' Candlestick Cove and fetched back the parson. An' no mistake had been made, believe me! The parson from Candlestick Cove

was a wise, kind old man, used t' the troubles of his folk, an' all mellow with love. An' so they went in together t' tell the lad. An' I followed. 'Twas comin' on twilight: I mind it well—twilight of a cloudy day. An' 'twas not Tom Tulk that told the lad that he was t' die. 'Twas the parson. An' the parson was so wise an' tender that the Giant-Killer smiled when he heard the news. The lad listened to the soft, grave voice—an' he puzzled a bit—an' his eyes opened wide—an' he turned at last t' Tom Tulk. He was not afraid: he was wonder-struck—an' maybe jus' a little bit amused. Here was a cruise, indeed!—a cruise t' the far places of his dreams. An' he was nothin' loath t' venture forth.

"'Die!' says he. 'Me?'

"'Poor lad!' says Tom Tulk.

"'I isn't afraid, gran'pop,' says the Giant-Killer. 'Don't you trouble about *me*. Why, *I'll* do well enough!'

"'Dear lad!' says Tom.

"'Die!' the lad mused. 'Well, well! Think o' that! Die! *Me!*' An' then he asked Tom Tulk: 'Will it be soon?'

"'Not long, lad.'

"'To-night?'

"'Oh, God!' Tom groaned. 'Not to-night—not so soon as that!'

"'Don't trouble, gran'pop!' says the lad. 'Oh, don't! *I'll* make fair weather of it.' He begun t' cry a little. 'But what is *you* goin' t' do?'

"'God knows!'

"'Gran'pop,' says the lad, 'you'll jus' have t' make the best of a bad job!'

"'I will, God help me!'

"'I'm sorry you got to, gran'pop,' says the lad. 'It's such a wonderful hard thing t' do.'"

## XVI

### FAR PLACES

"AN' the ol' parson from Candlestick Cove said many comforting things. A gentle face an' way he had: a slow, grave, soft voice. An' he had a heart o' love. Tom Tulk an' the little Giant-Killer listened t' the hopeful truths he told about life an' death an' eternity; an' somehow or other—so tender these words an' so splendid the hope—death was not a fearsome thing any more an' the places of Eternity seemed desirable. An' presently after the parson had gone away it fell dusk. A gusty wind outside: it drove offshore, thick with broken black clouds, flyin' low an' ragged over the earth. An' dark come on. All the light in the room was the light o' the stars that peeped in upon us like good company through the rents in the streamin' sky. But the Giant-Killer would have no lamp. He was lifted, then, on the pillow; an' he lay starin' out o' the window—t' the clouds the wind was blowin' out t' sea an' t' the tender little

stars in the far sky beyond. An' ol' Tom Tulk an' me sat downcast in the dark while the wee lad dreamed his own brave dreams o' those far places t' which he was bound.

"'I'm goin' away,' he whispered, by an' by. 'Well, well! Dear man! I'm goin' away again!'

"Ay, goin' away!

"'I'm goin' away all alone this time,' says he. 'I—wonders where.'

"Ah, well!

"Wind outside: swift gusts o' black wind runnin' out o' the wilderness an' bound t' sea. An' the room was dark; an' all the light in the world was beyond our place—outside with the wind an' the clouds an' the stars. An' the Giant-Killer listened t' the wind—an' watched the clouds drift across the pale sky on their long journey—an' searched the stars flung broadcast in the distances beyond. An' when his spirit was once more returned t' the darkness of our room he had strange fancies such as come t' them that die o' the decline.

"'Gran'pop!' he whispered. 'Where is you?'

"'Sittin' close beside you, lad.'

"'Come closer, gran'pop. I wants t' know that you're near. Ah, that's fine! I feels you now. Hark!'

"We listened.

"'Blowin' up,' says he.

"Again we hearkened t' the wind go past on its long journey.

"'Wind's from the s'uth'ard,' says he. 'Tis bound down north an' far away. An' all the clouds is goin' along. They'll see strange places. Dear man, they'll have a wonderful cruise! They'll pass Cape John an' peep in at the Gull Island light.'

"'Ay.'

"'An' sweep the Horse Islands.'

"'Ay.'

"'An' touch the harbours o' the French Shore an' cross the Straits.'

"'Ay.'

"'An' go down the Labrador. . . Gran'pop! Does you hear me? . . . I'm goin' farther than that.'

"'Where, lad?'

"'Away down north, gran'pop! Beyond Run-by-Guess an' the Hen-an'-Chickens. I'll

see Indian Harbour an' Cape Mugford. An' I'm bound beyond even that.'

"'So far, lad?'

"'Beyond Chidley, gran'pop!'

"'Ay?'

"'Further yet! I'm bound past the North Pole! I'm bound on an' on an' on! . . . Gran'pop! Does you hear me? Oh, listen! 'Tis a wonderful thing! . . . Look out o' the window. What does you see?'

"'I sees clouds.'

"'There's more than that. Look again an' tell me what you sees.'

"'I sees nothin' but clouds.'

"'Look once more. Oh, there's so much more t' see!'

"'There's stars beyond.'

"'Ay, stars! They fill the last places. An' I'm bound there. . . . Oh, listen! 'Tis such a wonderful thing! . . . 'Tis like another sea up there. An' all the stars is islands. How many stars? Oh, no man can count un! . . . Listen! Listen! 'Tis all so wonderful. . . . I'll cruise up there. I'll sail from star t' star. A million stars! A million harbours! There'll always be strange coasts

an' new places. . . . An' I'm bound there. An' I've not long t' wait. Star t' star! I'll sail from star t' star! . . . Oh, gran'pop, 'tis a wonderful thing t' die!'

"Tom Tulk was cryin'.

"'Don't cry, gran'pop!'

"'I can't help it, lad. I'm wonderful glad that your wish for far places will come true. But—oh, 'tis so hard t' see you start!'

"'I'm not afraid.'

"'No; you isn't afraid.'

"'You've teached me not t' be afraid o' nothin'.'

"'Ah, but you starts alone!'

"'I'm not afraid.'

"'I'll miss you so!'

"Then the lad sat up in bed. 'Listen!' says he, in wonder. 'Oh, listen! I've thought of a wonderful thing. Oh, I never thought o' such a wonderful thing afore. . . . Listen! . . I'll not go cruisin' yet.'

"'Not yet?'

"'Oh, no! Not yet. I'll hang offshore.'

"'Ay, lad?'

"'I'll hang offshore—jus' beyond the clouds.'

"'What for, lad?'

"'Waitin' for you t' come!'

"An' ol' Tom Tulk begun t' cry again. . . .

"Ah, well, 'twas ordained that the lad should die. . . . 'A wonderful thing t' die!' says he. . . . A brave way t' deal with Fate! T' make the best o' the worst: t' take the worst an' get the best. . . . An' maybe Jack the Giant-Killer served his purpose in the world an' is now with ol' Tom Tulk cruisin' stranger coasts than all the coasts o' the earth he could not see. He lived a big life for a wee feller like he. He teached Tom Tulk t' make the best of a bad job; an' afore Tom Tulk had done with life Tom Tulk had teached this coast just what the lad had teached t' him. An' on goes the lesson—on an' on an' on: there's no tellin' when it will stop. I teaches you. You'll teach it elsewhere. For generations t' come they'll teach it in the fo'c's'les o' the Labrador. Ecod, but the wan little Giant-Killer lived true to his name! He've done t' death many a giant o' Fear an' Complaint an' Despair."

Tumm paused.

"I 'low," said he, abruptly, "that I'll go aft t' the cabin an' give my little rose-bush a drop

o' water. I'm hopin' t' get a flower some day from that little rose-bush."

"You're wonderful fond o' that rose-bush," said the skipper of the *Quick as Wink.*

"Ay," Tumm admitted.

"A scrawny thing!"

"Ah, well, I've hopes."

"'Twill die on your hands."

"I tells you," Tumm insisted, "that I'll get a flower from that li'l' rose-bush one o' these days!"

And there was no more of the tale of Tom Tulk for the time. . . .

## XVII

### A BIT OF A CRUISE

THE wind was up and down the mast. There was no wind at all. And the *Quick as Wink* dawdled in the sleepy waters off Linger Tickle. Tumm whistled for a breeze to carry us in. Not so much as a breath stirred in reponse. Tumm scratched the anchor. A strong measure! But it brought no breeze. And then Tumm cast caution overboard. "Whatever happens," says he, "here goes!" He threw a penny over the side. And then saucily incanted: "There, devil, give us a copper's worth o' wind!" We waited in hopeful expectation; and presently, sure enough, a little wind crept in from the open, picked up the *Quick as Wink*, carried her to the anchorage of Linger Tickle and expired exhausted. And on deck, that night, under the Linger Tickle stars, Tumm resumed the blithe tale of old Tom Tulk. . . .

"Tom Tulk was never the same again," the

clerk went on. "From bein' a reckless driver in his youth an' a timid skipper in middle life he come to a cheery old age which no fortune could daunt. What happened to un? I wonder! What changed un when the little Giant-Killer said, 'Oh, well, I got t' make the best of a bad job!' on deck that night at Soap-an'-Water? What happened t' ol' Tom Tulk? God knows! I don't. But I've thought, sometimes, that the Giant-Killer's patient words was like a light thereafter t' the path of ol' Tom Tulk. The best of a bad job! 'Oh, well, gran'pop, I got t' make the best of a bad job!' says the Giant-Killer. An' 'twas thereafter ol' Tom Tulk's religion t' do the same.

"'My favourite Bible-tex',' ol' Tom used t' say, 'is "A li'l' kid makes the best pilot."'

"Afore the fall gales o' that year had done with blowin', Tom Tulk laid the Giant-Killer away in the only bed the wee chap could be sure o' restin' in without pain. 'Twas at Rickity Tickle: a lee spot—green an' flowery in summer time—on the slope o' Sunshine Hill. An' after that Tom Tulk moved t' Rickity Tickle for good an' lived in his cottage by Blow-Me. He would skipper a trader no longer. So Pinch-a-

Penny Peter got a new master for the *Call Again;* an' Tom Tulk—ol' Tom Tulk—took the *Seventh Son* down north t' fish the Labrador on shares for Pinch-a-Penny Peter. Season after season he took her down an' come back loaded or with a blithe heart made the best of a bad job; an' so life went along with un until he was cast away at the ice an' there fried his eyes, as I've told.

"A good man, sure! An' a brave man, too! A stout-hearted ol' codger, in the last years o' life, when men's hearts fail! An ol' feller lusty in the spirit, not cast down by age, not daunted by any mishap, willin' at all times for the harsh labour o' these coasts, quick with cheery words an' limpid jokes with which t' get t' win'ward o' fear an' melancholy! Thus he come t' be when the little Giant-Killer had give un a compass o' truth t' guide his course in the world an' had put in his ol' heart the hope o' makin' some harbour in good company. An' thus he continued t' be until he got cast away at the ice an' damaged his sight beyond repair. You mind the yarn I spun for you in Pinch-a-Penny's ol' shop at Rickity Tickle?—of how Tom Tulk was lost an' abandoned when

Pinch-a-Penny's *Blue Streak* scraped past the Blueblack Shoal? an' of how Tom Tulk swam t' the comfort o' young Jerry Tall? an' of how Tom Tulk fought for life against the big white seas that beat un down? an' of how Tom Tulk kept on crawlin' over the ice towards Rickity Tickle when he had no sight for walkin' no more?

"Well, that was the kind of ol' codger that ol' Tom Tulk had come t' be.

"An' why?

"'I got religion,' says Tom.

"What religion?

"'You'll find my text,' says Tom, grave as a parson, 'in a portion o' the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter twelve, thirteenth verse: "Let us hear the conclusion o' the whole matter: A good man makes the best of a bad job."'

"An' the ol' codger done it, too! He done it when he used t' take the *Seventh Son* down t' the Labrador fishin', year after year, an' come back loaded or with a blithe heart make the light o' the failure an' face a lean winter with a smile an' a saucy grin. 'As for me,' says he, 'my friend is Laughter from Get-Along-Somehow an' my best bedfellow is called Grit. *I'll* make the best of a bad job,

never fear! An' I'll live an' leave a tale with a moral, too, as every good man should do, whether he dies rich or poor—a tale that they'll tell in the fo'c's'les o' the Labrador fleet o' black nights when the bones of ol' Tom Tulk is long gone t' dust on Sunshine Hill or is picked clean by the fishes that swims these shores.' Well, well! Dear man! 'Twas a clean boast, fulfilled every day of ol' Tom Tulk's life. An' 'twas a vast promise o' future behaviour in whatever the fortune that fell. An' here was Tom Tulk, in the spring o' the year, old past the vigour o' men as lusty for labour as he, an' now fetched in from the ice, bruised an' frost-bit an' blind as a bat, with nothin' t' look forward to, that any man could see, but a seat in the sun an' the charity o' the tender-hearted.

"'Daunted?' says he. '*Me?*'

"'Last harbour, lad,' says Pinch-a-Penny Peter.

"'Isn't I got my religion? Damme, read your Bible! Ecclesiastes, chapter twelve, verse thirteen!'

"'No more goin' t' sea.'

"'Damme, Skipper Peter,' says the ol' feller,

when they got un stowed away in bed, 'if I can't *see* my way through life I'll *smell* it! I'll make the best of a bad job. You mark *me!*'

"An' he done it in the way that I'll presently tell.

"I mind well what happened soon after Tom Tulk went snow-blind. 'Twas a thing that no man could forget. Tom Tulk was up an' about the house an' hearty enough by that time. But his eyes was still bandaged; an' no man could tell—nor did Tom Tulk know—whether he was blind for good an' all or not. 'Twas still spring weather: the harbour was free, the tickle was clear, there was no ice offshore, an' the yellow sunshine fell warm an' thick on the platform o' Tom's cottage by Blow-Me. An' I found the ol' codger in the kitchen. There he stood, in the middle o' the kitchen floor, blind as a bat, talkin' in the strangest fashion to hisself. 'Port!' says he, as he groped about. 'Starboard a little!' There was nobody about t' hear un. 'Steady as she goes!' says he. 'An' now,' says he, 'I 'low I've learned my lesson.' An' then somehow or other he got ear o' me standin' in the door.

"He jumped around. 'Who's that?' says he.

"'Tumm, sir.'

"'Ah, well, Tumm,' says he, 'don't you mind the little jump I give. I isn't quite used t' doin' without my eyes.'

"'What *is* you doin'?' says I.

"He laughed. 'Me?' says he. 'Oh, I'm havin' a wonderful good time gettin' acquainted with my own kitchen an' door-step. I've lived in this kitchen for a number o' years, Tumm, an' yet, somehow or other, I've learned more about my tables an' chairs in the last hour than ever I knowed before. I tells you, lad, eyes isn't everything. When a man haves two hands t' feel with he can do very well. An' now I'll show you what I means. Did you look at the platform as you come up the path?'

"'I did.'

"'Very good,' says he. 'What did you see?'

"'I seed a chair.'

"'Right!' says he. 'That's my ol' arm-chair. An' now, Tumm,' says he, '*I'm goin' out an' sit down.*'

"'Give me your hand,' says I.

"'Oh, no!' says he. 'Not much! I doesn't want t' be led. I'm goin' out on the platform an' sit down in my ol' armchair without any help at all.'

"'Dear man!' says I. 'Your eyes is bandaged. You can't ——'

"'Yes, I can!' says he.

"'Ay, but ——'

"'An' if I can do that,' says he, 'I can learn t' do a deal more.'

"'There's many things in the way,' says I. 'You'll strike.'

"'How does you know, Tumm, that there's many things in the way?'

"'I sees un.'

"'Jus' so,' says he. 'You *sees* un. An' does you think that there's no other way o' findin' out?'

"'Maybe,' says I.

"'Oh, pshaw, Tumm!' says he. 'I know what's in the way just so well as you does. Eyes isn't everything. I've got my course laid out an' I'll not strike nothin' as I goes. Anyhow, I'm goin', hit or miss. If I happen t' strike, why, I 'low I'll be cast away. An' I'll not go by the front door neither. That's too

easy. I'll go out the kitchen door an' around t' the front o' the house.'

"'Give me your hand,' says I.

"'Oh, no,' says he. 'I'm all right. I've been over the course an' sounded an' charted it. 'Twill be a lesson t' watch me.'

"With that the ol' codger backed up t' the settle an' squared his course by its direction. 'Go ahead!' says he, like a captain sendin' signals t' the engineer an' wheelsman. An' off he started. 'Port a little!' says he. An' jus' in time, too! He was near ashore on the table. 'Starboard!' says he. An' he scraped past a naughty reef o' chairs with no more than an inch t' spare. 'Steady as she goes!' says he. An' on he went. 'Twas a lesson for the best of us. Take it to yourself, look you! You knows how you goes in your own room when 'tis dark. Your hands is out—your feet is vastly uncertain —an'you stop an' shrink an' wonder where you is. Not so ol' Tom Tulk! 'Port!' says he. 'Starboard a little! Steady as she goes!' An' he went out the kitchen door an' down the path; an' he rounded the house an' went up the steps t' the platform. 'Stop her!' says he. An' then he stopped in his tracks an' faced about.

"'Now, Tumm,' says he, 'there *ought* t' be a chair direckly behind me.'

"'Maybe there is,' says I.

"'Anyhow, there ought t' be,' says he.

"'None o' *my* business,' says I.

"'I ought t' be able,' says he, 't' sit down without alarm.'

"'You better feel an' find out, Skipper Tom.'

"'Oh, no!' says he. 'A man can't learn nothin' that way.'

"I reckoned that he didn't want *me* t' tell un nothin'. An' so I held my tongue.

"'Accordin' t' the dead reckonin' I been runnin' on,' says he, 'I'd sit fair in that chair *if I sot down.*'

"I kep' right on holdin' my tongue. *I* wasn't goin' t' spoil the show.

"'It takes a sight o' courage, Tumm,' says he, scratchin' his beard, 't' sit down in this parlous fashion. But I'm goin' t' sit down jus' the same. An' if I'm off the course I'll certainly get bumped.'

"Then the ol' codger sot down in his ol' armchair an' cocked his leg as easy as you likes.

"'A lovely evenin', Tumm,' says he."

## XVIII

## NEW COURSES

"BY an' by ol' Tom says: 'Wearin' a new pair o' shoes, isn't you, lad?'

"I was.

"'Well, well!' says he. 'Dear man!'

"'Nothin' wonderful in that,' says I.

"'Tis not wonderful that you're wearin' new shoes,' says he; 'but 'tis a wonderful thing that I knows it.'

"'Tis a simple thing!'

"'I can't *see* your shoes.'

"'Sure, no,' says I; 'but 'twas no trick for you t' tell that my shoes is new. You heard un squeak.'

"'True enough,' says he. 'That's how I knowed. Still an' all 'tis a wonderful thing.'

"'Child's play, Skipper Tom!'

"'Not at all!' says he. ''Tis a wonderful thing that I can sit here with my eyes bandaged an' know without your tellin' me that you got on a new pair o' shoes. Can't you understand that, Tumm?'

"'I'm free t' say,' says I, 'that I'm not astonished. You heard my new shoes squeak.'

"'Jus' so,' says he. 'My eyes didn't tell me that your shoes is new. My ears told me. An' if my ears can tell me that much *they can tell me more.* That's the p'int, lad! My ears will make good servants if I loses my sight altogether. I'm goin' t' start right away an' *train* my ears.'

"'They'll never answer for eyes.'

"'I'm an old man,' says he. 'All my life long I've lived with my ears. An' I've never got out o' them anything like the labour they're able t' do. But I'm goin' t' begin now. You sit still, Tumm, an' I'll find out what my ears is good for.'

"We sot there for a spell without sayin' a word. Tom Tulk jus' listened. It seemed t' me that ears would not serve un very well. 'Twas easy enough for the ol' feller t' hear my shoes squeak an' argue that they was new; but for un to undertake t' listen t' the harbour sounds an' tell what was goin' on was quite another matter. 'Twas comin' on evenin'. An' 'twas very quiet in harbour. I looked about.

An' the only stir I could see was ol' Jimmie Lot comin' in from the grounds in his punt. He was within the tickle an' was roundin' The Pancake t' pull to his stage-head an' land his fish.

"'Ol' Jimmie Lot got his load the day,' says Tom Tulk.

"'Ay,' says I.

"Tom Tulk laughed.

"'Dear man!' says I, 'how did *you* know that ol' Jimmie Lot was pullin' across the harbour with a load o' fish?'

"'Oh, my ears told me,' says Skipper Tom. 'I can hear Jimmie's oars squeak against the thole-pins. An' I happen t' know the way that Jimmie rows. Jimmie an' me is both old men. I've watched Jimmie pull from the tickle to his own stage these many years. I've watched un come in with nar a fish, an' I've watched un come in loaded. He pulls in a certain way when he've got a load o' fish; an' he pulls in another when he comes in empty. Every time I've watched un I've *heard* un too; but I never afore noticed that I had heard un. Does you understand? I knowed all the time—without ever afore knowin' that I knowed—just what

went on with the sound that Jimmie was makin'. An' as I was sittin' here listenin' I cotched ear o' the squeak o' Jimmie's oars. An' the minute I heard that particular kind o' noise I knowed that Jimmie Lot was comin' across the harbour jus' as well as if I had looked an' seed. Why, Tumm, I *could* see Jimmie Lot comin' across the harbour with a load o' fish!'

"'You struck it right, Skipper Tom,' says I. 'That's just what Jimmie's doin'.'

"'Hist!' says Tom.

"We hearkened.

"'Well,' says I, 'what d'ye hear now?' I could hear nothin' at all meself that meant anything t' me.

"'Dear man!' says Tom. 'Well, well! That's wonderful. But it's right. An' I knows it.' An' then he begun t' laugh. 'Tumm,' he chuckled, 'you got two eyes in your head, isn't you?'

"'Pair o' binoculars, sir.'

"'Very good,' says he. 'I'll ask you a question. Is Shot-Bag Rock breakin'?'

"'How should I know?'

"'You got eyes, isn't you?'

"'Ay, sure! But Shot-Bag Rock can't be seed from here.'

"'Ah-ha, Tumm!' says he; 'a man don't need t' see Shot-Bag Rock t' be able t' tell whether the sea is breakin' there the day or not. Isn't you got ears?'

"'No mortal ears can hear Shot-Bag Rock from here.'

"'Jus' so,' says he. 'That's right. But a man don't need t' hear Shot-Bag Rock t' know that Shot-Bag Rock is breakin'. Now, Tumm,' says he, 'no sound o' the sea can be heard where we sits here on my platform. An' yet I knows for myself that there's a high sea runnin' outside an' that Shot-Bag Rock is spoutin' like a fountain.'

"'But how, Skipper Tom?'

"'Jus' by puttin' two an' two together.'

"'Well,' says I, 'I can't fathom it.'

"'Then,' says he, 'I'll tell you. 'Tis a very simple thing. In my young days I used t' hook-an'-line off Shot-Bag Rock. Many's the day I've spent there in quiet seas an' rough ones. An' at the close of every day I pulled in t' harbour. Well, now, as I pulled into my own little cove I rounded that little point down

below. Hark! Can't you hear the harbour water wash that little point? Well, in a high sea, rollin' in from the nor'east, a swell comes through the tickle an' breaks there. 'Tis a quiet evenin'. There's no wind-lop on the harbour. Yet that little point is breakin'. An' so I knows that there is a high enough sea runnin' outside t' break on Shot-Bag Rock. An' I knows it jus' by hearin' what's handy an' puttin' two an' two together.'

"Ol' Jimmie Lot was landin' at his stagehead. 'Ahoy, Skipper Jimmie!' I sung out. 'Much sea outside?'

"'Big sea outside,' says Jimmie. 'Ol' Shot-Bag's spoutin'.'

"'Ah-ha, Tumm!' Tom Tulk chuckled. 'There you got it! An' all jus' by puttin' two an' two together. Eyes isn't everything. An' ears isn't so much until they're trained t' do their work without shirkin'. When a man can listen t' what's handy an' know what's goin' on beyond, he'll do very well with his ears, I'll be bound! If my sight ever does go back on me, Tumm, I'll have a wonderful good time gettin' along in other ways.'

"The ol' codger was delighted."

## XIX

### HARSH FORTUNE

"NO trouble t' talk," Tumm went on; "but 'tis frequently trouble enough for a man t' do what he says he'll do. All very well for a man t' *say* what he'll do in a gale o' wind. Reef? Oh, no! No reefs for he! Never sails with more than one reef anyhow! But when the wind falls down like liquid lead 'tis a different matter entirely. An' so too with Trouble: there's many a man will face Trouble with a blithe face an' merry words an' then have his heart fail when Trouble comes down like a wild nor'easter in the fall o' the year. Tom Tulk was no exception. When he took off his bandage an' found that he was gone near stone blind in his old age he was downcast for a time. An' 'twas so I found un one night—sittin' downcast in the sunset light with his gray old face in his hands.

"'Near blind, Tumm,' says he. 'Oh, near blind!'

"'I'm sorry, sir.'

"'Dear God!' says he.

"'Twas a pitiful thing!

"'Can't see much more than an inch or two,' says he. 'But I 'low I'll improve a bit, lad. Oh, I'll improve!'

"'Still an' all, sir, I'm wonderful sorry.'

"He lifted his face from his hands an' showed me his blood-red eyes. 'Harsh fortune,' says he, 'an' bitter t' the taste. 'Twould screw the mouth of a saint.'

"'Come what will,' says I, 'you'll make the best of it.'

"He begun t' chuckle. 'Ever hear tell o' ol' Tom Swat—the whalin' skipper o' Jewel Island?' says he. 'I used t' hear the tale in my youth. 'Twas said that ol' Tom Swat o' Jewel Island had so encouraged his nose that he could smell out the whales he was after off the Greenland coast. Ah-ha, Tumm! What d'ye think o' that? Ha, ha! An' so maybe I can teach my ears t' give good service in many a hard case t' come.' An' then ol' Tom Tulk throwed back his head an' laughed like a lad.

"T' be sure, when the ol' man begun t' feel

his way over the harbour roads, they called un Blind Tom Tulk. An' that was the name he went by forever after. Blind Tom Tulk o' Rickity Tickle. But he wasn't so blind as they named un. He could see jus' about half-way where he was bound for—which was far enough for he. 'Twas never said by a Rickity Tickle man that Blind Tom Tulk couldn't get where he was goin' in plenty o' time t' be there. An' he didn't give up the *Seventh Son*. Not he! 'I'll manage,' says he, 'by makin' the best of a bad job.' For a season—an' for one season only—he was not on the Labrador. 'Afore I goes down again,' says he, 'I must learn t' make the best o' the eyes I got left or find new ways o' gettin' about. An' so I'll stay t' home this season an' learn my lessons.' An' he learned his lessons well: down north he went next year—an' many a year thereafter.

"'Twas a marvel t' the coast how the ol' feller got the *Seventh Son* down an' back.

"'Bein' half blind,' says he, 'I can see better than ever afore.'

"'Ay, Tom?'

"'I've growed in the knowledge o' small things.'

"'But that's tellin' nothin', Tom.'

"'For one thing,' says he, 'I've got acquainted with the tip o' me own nose.'

"'What's a nose to a Labrador skipper?'

"'Nose!' says Tom. 'I don't need no nose. Dear man, I could find the North Pole with the eyes I got!'

"'But *how*, Tom?'

"'Look you!' says he. 'Can I go as fur as I can see?'

"'Ay.'

"'Very good!' says he. 'When I go as fur as I can see, I can see jus' as fur furder.'

"By this time ol' Tom was goin' on eighty. I mind well the looks of un. He was an odd ol' codger with a lean gray beard an' blinkin' white eyes—peerin' out his way over the roads o' harbour when he wasn't off fishin' the Labrador. He was humped a bit, too; an' his neck was stretched, an' his head hung low an' loose, all with huntin' his path.

"I used t' think that havin' no eyes t' speak of he found his way like a huskie dog.

"No staff, mark you!

"'Staff?' says he; 'a staff's for a ol' feller

with rheumatics. A hale an' hearty codger like *me* don't need no *staff* t' get about with!'

"An' he would go fast enough, on a shaky little toddle, wastin' no steps by the way, with his head waggin', his eyes poppin' out, an' his beard forgin' on like a bowsprit.

"'Jus' a matter o' knowin' how,' says he.

"I never seed un dodge or dawdle on the roads: 'twas make a start an' get there by short cuts with he; an' he knowed the short cuts o' Rickity Tickle—an' the inshore courses o' the Labrador—so well as any man with real eyes in his head.

"'Short allowance o' sight,' says he, 'so I *got* t' know my way.'

"Down the hill he would come from his cottage by Blow-Me, with his nose t' the ground, like a dog on an errand; an' he would have a wink an' a grin for whatever an' all that come by.

"'I'm a bit hard o' seein',' says he; 'but I got a smile that runs free.'

"He would never need t' see you t' greet you.

"'Hi, there, Tumm!' says he. 'Fine even-in', lad.'

"'Skipper Tom, sir,' says I, 'how did you know 'twas I on the road?'

"'Isn't man, maid, lad nor dog in this harbour,' says he, 'whose step I don't know. Skipper Bill's lad doin' well?'

"'How'd you know I was t' Charlie Luff's?'

"'Heard the gate click—an' I knows that click. You'll find Bessie Tot gone t' Clearwater Well. I heard she close the kitchen door as I passed by.'

"''Tis fair uncanny!' cries I.

"'Sure, no,' says he; 'you're forever mawkin' after Bessie Tot when her father's abroad—an' my ears have told me that her father has jus' gone t' prayer-meetin'.'

"'Ay, but——'

"'Hut!' says he; 'you'd a lover's footfall comin' up the hill. Toe hurt?'

"'Which toe?' says I.

"'I'm thinkin' 'twould be the right,' says he. 'You stubbed it on the red stone by the Needle. I heard you.'

"'Isn't no stone there,' says I, t' tease un.

"'Ah-ha!' he chuckled. 'Isn't no stone there, eh? Why, Tumm, I stubbed *my* toe

there once. An' a man with fried eyes doesn't forget a thing like that. I tells you, Tumm, a man never knows what the world really looks like afore he goes half blind.'

"'All well an' good,' says I, 'but I'd not give my sight for the knowledge.'

"'Nor nobody else,' says Tom.

"'Twas true.

"'Anyhow,' says he, 'afore I went half blind I never seed half as much as I sees now.'"

## XX

### THE CONCH HORN

"'TWAS some years after he had fried his eyes at the ice that Tom Tulk made a discovery that presently served un well in a case o' sore need. It made un famous, too, on this coast; an' it all come about through the habit that Tom Tulk had formed o' makin' his ears do all the work they was able for an' o' teachin' his mind t' put two an' two together. 'Twas early summer. The Labrador fleet was fitted out; an' Pinch-a-Penny Peter's vessels, with the *Seventh Son* among un, lay in Rickity Tickle waitin' for a fair wind down north. There was nothin' for ol' Tom Tulk t' do but keep his patience; an' t' that end he went out on the Shot-Bag grounds in the punt with me t' hook-an'-line what fish we could catch. There was no wind: 'twas a still, clear, clean day. An' by an' by evenin' come on, an' us put about an' pulled for harbour. 'Twas only dawdlin' along, in love with the quiet an' colour o' the world; there was no

haste t' make the tickle t' harbour. An' by an' by we come within hail o' ol' Jimmie Lot, pullin' in from the Mad Mull rocks.

"I hailed ol' Jimmie. 'What luck, Skipper Jimmie?' I sung out.

"I don't mind what Skipper Jimmie answered. But I do mind—an' I'll never forget it—the look that all at once spread over Blind Tom Tulk's face. 'Twas that of amazement—an' o' triumph, too.

"'Sing out again!' says he.

"'What you so excited about, Skipper Tom?'

"'Sing out again!' says he.

"An' so I sung out once more: 'What luck, Skipper Jimmie?'

"'Hark!' says Tom. 'Did you hear?'

"'He says, sir,' says I, 'that there's nar a fish t' be had.'

"'That all?'

"'All *I* heard.'

"'Ah-ha, Tumm! Much more than *that* happened. Why, lad, a wonderful thing happened!'

"'No, sir,' says I. 'Is you goin' mad? Nar another thing at all happened.'

"'Ah-ha!' he chuckled. 'Well, well! Dear man! Nothin' more happened? Ah-ha! Why, Tumm, lad, I got an idea. 'Tis a wonderful idea. Nobody ever thought of it afore. An' I 'low I'll be able t' use it t' good purpose in my business afore very long. Man, this has been a great day for Blind Tom Tulk! Tom Tulk will show un how t' make the best of a bad job. Now, you mark *me!*'

"'What is it, Skipper Tom?'

"'Oh, nothin' much,' says he. 'This world is full o' little voices for the blind.'

"'What voices, sir?'

"'Well,' says he, 'the breakers haves each its own voice. I found that out long ago.'

"'But there's no sea on to-day. You've heard no breaker the day long.'

"'There's many other little voices,' says he.

"An' he would tell me no more. I plagued un all the way t' the tickle. But he would tell me nothin' at all. I had t' satisfy curiosity with wonder. An' I wondered—an' wondered—but could not fathom the delight o' Tom Tulk in the new idea he had. 'Twas not until afterwards—when ol' Tom Tulk was in the sorest need of his life—that I come t' know

"THE MYSTERY OF TOM TULK, HIS EYES BANDAGED, BLOWING ON A CONCH-HORN"

what had really happened when I sung out t' ol' Jimmie Lot t' know how the fish was runnin' off Mad Mull. An' then it was perfectly clear.

"Next day the folk o' Rickity Tickle thought that ol' Tom Tulk had gone clean out of his senses. An' I thought so, too. An' no wonder! The mystery of ol' Tom Tulk, with his eyes bandaged, blowin' on a conch horn, was quite enough t' make queer talk. There was no wind: the Labrador vessels was still held in harbour. An' just at dawn, afore I had the sleep washed out o' my eyes, Tom Tulk came shufflin' up the path t' the kitchen door.

"'Tumm, lad,' says he, 'go fetch the bait-skiff horn.'

"'Name o' wonder!' says I. 'What for?'

"'Ah-ha!' says he. 'I wants t' try a little experiment with my ears. I'll puzzle you sorely afore *this* day dies.'

"Well, I went down t' Jimmie Lot's stage, where the bait-skiff horn was kept, an' fetched it back. 'Twas a conch shell, with a hole in it: so that if a man knowed how t' use lips an'

lungs on it he could blow a blast that would wake the harbour. In the caplin season, when they uses them little fish for bait, the folk take turns at mannin' the skiff. 'Tis the bait-skiff conch that calls un t' put out; an' 'tis the bait-skiff conch that warns the harbour that the skiff is back with the bait.

"'There!' says I. 'Now what?'

"'Queer doin's now,' he chuckled. 'We'll go offshore in the punt.'

"'What for, Skipper Tom?'

"'Never you mind,' says he. 'No fishin', anyhow.'

"I pulled un through the tickle an' out t' the deep water beyond the last reefs an' shallows. When we come t' the point where the schooners turn into the channel Tom Tulk bade me leave off rowin' an' sit still. Then he blowed a blast on the conch horn an' listened. Nothin' happened. I pulled a few fathoms. Tom Tulk tried again. Nothin' happened that I could tell; but ol' Tom grinned as if he had found what he was lookin' for. An' so it went on all mornin' long—myself pullin' here an' there as I was told, an' ol' Tom blowin' blasts on the bait-skiff conch an' then cockin' his head like a

robin redbreast. By this time there was some folk gathered on the Lookout t' see the queer sight. But Tom was not bothered at all. I doubt that he knowed he was makin' such an almighty fool of hisself that the Rickity Tickle folk was leavin' their work t' see the show.

"'Very good, Tumm,' says he, at last. 'Now pull out again.'

"I pulled out t' the point where ol' Tom had first blowed the horn. An' then the ol' codger took out a clean kerchief an' bandaged his eyes. Once more the mad performance! I pulled an' ol' Tom blowed. 'Port!' says he. An' 'Starboard a little!' an' 'Steady as she goes!' jus' like a pilot. An' we come nearer an' nearer t' the shore. I made sure that the ol' man would go ashore on All-in-the-Way. But he not only dodged All-in-the-Way but dodged Soapy Reef an' Shag Rock as well. 'Twas slow gettin' along. Sometimes ol' Tom would stop an' think. An' sometimes he would go right on with never a pause. When he stopped he would be troubled; but when his course was fast he would grin like a lad with a new watch. Blow, blow, blow! Long blasts an' short ones! 'Twas such a mys-

tery that by an' by I was filled with disgust because I could not fathom it.

"'Skipper Tom,' says I, 'you simply *got* t' tell me.'

"'No, I won't!' says he.

"'Dear man,' says I, 'I'll never be able t' sleep until I knows.'

"'I've no wish t' trouble you,' says he. 'But I'll tell you never a word until I knows that this small experiment with my ears has succeeded.'

"Nor would he tell me. An' next day he took the *Seventh Son* down the Labrador for his season's fishin'."

## XXI

### GOOD SERVANTS

"T' BE sure Blind Tom Tulk got older an' older, an' Pinch-a-Penny Peter got older, too; but while Blind Tom Tulk kep' good-humour for bedfellow, Pinch-a-Penny Peter, what with bad debts an' fish worries, grew wrinkled an' crabbed. Came, then, I mind, the Lean Year o' Seven. It near keeled Pinch-a-Penny over. An' as for the folk o' Rickity Tickle, who must go to the ol' man for food, 'twas like hangin' t' beg a barrel o' flour an' a gallon o' sweetness. T' cheer Pinch-a-Penny up, however, there was a change in politics t' St. John's. The Opposition got in on the wind o' famine; an' Pinch-a-Penny Peter, bein' with the gov'ment at last, 'lowed he'd have the mail-boat call at Rickity Tickle or he'd know the reason why.

"She come. 'Twas the *Scotia:* ol' Cap'n Hand, master. Rickity Tickle was thereafter a regular port o' call. Ay, the *Scotia* called—

when she could! But 'tis wild waters hereabouts, with naughty reefs an' no lights, an' Cap'n Hand would never fetch the *Scotia* in of a dark or foggy time. So we had somewhat less at Rickity Tickle than a decent allowance o' gov'ment attention—which is worse than none at all.

"'Wisht *I* had that teakettle,' says Blind Tom Tulk.

"'You!' says Pinch-a-Penny Peter.

"'Isn't no fog could stop *me* gettin' about,' says Tom.

"'Hut!'

"'*I* got ears!'

"'So's an ass,' says Peter; 'got more ears 'n anything.'

"It hurt Tom Tulk's feelin's. 'Skipper Peter,' says he, 'you leave my ears alone. I'm fond of un.'

"'Have done, ye noddie!'

"'They're good servants,' says Tom. 'I likes my ears.'

"'Ay; t' catch harbour gossip.'

"Tom Tulk got up. 'Anyhow,' says he, the tears of old age in his fried eyes, '*eyes* isn't no good of a foggy night!'

"'Twas early in the season, then: long afore the Labrador fleet was fitted out—foggy weather an' the dark o' the moon. But there come a fine blue spurt o' days, with the *Scotia* due on her fortnightly call. She come bowlin' in through the narrows; but she had no sooner landed her mail than she put out t' sea in haste, with Blind Tom Tulk on the bridge along with Cap'n Hand.

"'Well, well!' thinks we. 'What now!'

"Then they was another mad performance offshore. It brought Rickity Tickle t' the cliffs o' Blow-Me t' watch the sight. Here went the *Scotia!* There she went! An' she kep' backin' an' fillin' an' fair blowin' her head off. There was no end t' her fussin' about an' no end t' the toot of her whistle. It seemed t' we, on the cliffs, by an' by, that she had churned every drop o' water between the heads o' the bay. An' then, four times, she put offshore, an' come forgin' back t' the narrows again, dodgin' the reefs at full speed, her whistle barkin' from time t' time, without reason that any could see. 'Twas fallin' dusk when she come in for the last time an' landed Tom Tulk. But nobody was the wiser when Tom come ashore: for

Cap'n Hand didn't come with un, an' Blind Tom Tulk said never a word, whatever was said t' he.

"'Twas a large mystery. But there was honour in it, somewhere, for ol' Tom Tulk. Lyin' alongside the *Scotia* in my punt, t' pick Tom up, as I had promised, I seed Cap'n Hand lay a paw on the ol' man's shoulder, an' I heard Cap'n Hand speak words in the ol' man's ear, which was words o' praise, I knowed by the way that Tom was grinnin' when he come overside.

"'What you been doin', Skipper Tom?' says I.

"'Oh,' says he, 'I jus' been givin' ol' Cap'n Hand's ears a li'l' lesson in hearin'.'

"An' no more!"

## XXII

### PAST HIS LABOUR

"I'VE no blame for Pinch-a-Penny Peter in these days. He was ill nicknamed t' the best o' my knowledge; an' he was now growed old for his burdens. With the Lean Year o' Seven t' weather, he'd been hard pressed for ease o' mind. 'Twas a famine, indeed—as my belly remembers. But he had managed somehow t' get Rickity Tickle t' the spring o' the year with no deaths from starvation; an' he was now hard put to it t' stave off his creditors at St. John's an' outfit the hook-an'-line men an' Labrador schooners for the season upon us. I mind well the time when Blind Tom Tulk come t' the office for his berth on the *Seventh Son*. 'Twas close o' day. But there was light enough left for labour—a black sky far off at sea beyond the narrows of our harbour, with the red glory o' the sun behind.

"Pinch-a-Penny Peter was hunched up on a high stool at the big desk by the window, pen put aside. He was a weazened little runt—

clean shaven an' gray eyed. I could see from the shop that he was lookin' in a muse o' trouble at the tickle waters where his schooners lay fittin' out. An' I mind thinkin' that he was a old, old man, seein' less o' the schooners below than o' the sunset light at sea, an' hearin' never a word at all o' hammer an' saw, nor a word o' the blithe young song o' little Billy Luff, though the window was open t' the soft spring wind.

"Pinch-a-Penny turned about on the stool when Blind Tom Tulk come in.

"'Well, Tom?' says he.

"'Feel o' fog in the air,' says Tom.

"'Ay, Tom,' says Peter; 'they's a mist comin' over the sun.'

"'A red world, the night,' says Tom.

"Pinch-a-Penny looked out o' the window. 'Twas a red world even then. There was a blood-red sea an' sky beyond the tickle rocks. 'An' no mail-boat,' says Peter.

"'Oh, ay,' says Tom; 'they'll be a mail-boat the night.'

"'Fog's down, Tom: a black night fallin'.'

"'Ay,' says Tom; 'but I've put a pair o' ears on that tin kettle.'

"'What you mean, Tom?'

"'What I says, Peter. I put a couple o' good ears on that tin kettle.'

"Pinch-a-Penny turned about, again, with a little jerk o' temper; an' then:

"'Well, Tom?' says he.

"'I 'lowed I'd drop in, Peter,' says Tom, 'an' tell you I'd take the *Seventh Son* north again as usual.'

"'Ay?'

"'I'm fit an' able as ever,' says Tom, 'an' I've no disgust with labour. Sure, I'm the toughest ol' codger the coast ever knowed!'

"Pinch-a-Penny drummed on the desk.

"'Thumb-an'-Finger o' Pinch-Me Head,' says Tom: 'they'll be fish a-plenty on the Harbourless Shore *this* season.'

"Peter looked out o' the window, his chin in his hands. They was knockin' off, down below; an' little Billy's song was still, an' there wasn't no sound o' hammer an' saw. The room was filled with red shadows: a red world beyond—a hot glare over the sea an' a crimson mist on the hills.

"'Peter!' says Tom.

"Pinch-a-Penny didn't answer.

"'Isn't you there, Peter?'

"'Ay, Tom.'

"'I—I—didn't hear nothin',' says Tom; 'an' —an'—my eyes ——'

"'Ay, Tom?'

"'Dear God!' says Tom. 'What you mean? Can't I have the *Seventh Son* no more?'

"'I wisht I was sure o' your eyes.'

"'I'm not past me labour, Peter!'

"'We're both old men, Tom.'

"'I'm fit an' able!'

"Pinch-a-Penny dropped the words one by one; an' they come down like clods on a coffin:

"'Business—is—business!'

"'Ay, Peter,' says Tom, 'but what'll I do *now?*'

"'Take your rest, Tom.'

"'I isn't able,' says Blind Tom Tulk, 'with sound labour left in me!'

"No fuss at all: no more than jus' that. Whether past his labour or not, 'twas over with Blind Tom Tulk. He was a leaf in the frost, now, with a grip on the branch, maybe, but soon t' fall into the wind. He said good-night with good cheer, for 'twas ever his way t' be kind; an' I thought un a fine brave figure of a

Newf'un'lander—an old, old man, yet cravin' his labour in a needy world o' men, straight up in the crimson light, a good wish an' a smile for the man who'd taken away his joy. But I seed that he stumbled a bit, on his way through the shop, an' I had never seed un stumble afore; an' he muttered, 'Oh, dear God!' as he passed me, an' 'twas the first word o' real complaint that ever fell from his lips t' my knowledge since he had laid the little Giant-Killer away.

"So I followed out, an' walked home alongside, t' the cottage by Blow-Me. An' though Tom Tulk said never a word by the way, I fancied he had no mean thought o' the company of a lad like me, bein' a great reader o' the hearts o' folk. 'Twas fallen near dark when we climbed the hill. There was some coals aglow, beyond the tickle, like the embers of a burnt-out fire; but a soggy fog was down—thick on sea an' hills—an' afore we come t' Tom Tulk's gate 'twas dark as midnight on our coast. Skipper Tom stopped, then, t' sense the weather: no glance about, at all—jus' a little wait, with his head cocked; an' then, it seemed t' me, he knowed all about it.

"'A black night,' says he, 'for young an' old.'

"'No mail-boat the night,' says I.

"'She'll come, Tumm,' says he; 'she've ears t' hear with. Good-night, lad.'

"'Man,' says I, 'she *can't* come in the night! 'Tis too dark an' foggy for any craft t' enter Rickity Tickle.'

"'She've ears, Tumm.'

"'You're jokin', Skipper Tom.'

"'No,' says he. 'I've give her two ears t' hear with.'

"An' 'twas all true enough!"

## XXIII

### THE MIRACLE

"WHEN I got back t' the shop 'twas a hullabaloo I encountered. Pinch-a-Penny Peter had broke a leg. A slip in the dark, says they, on the rocks o' Squid Cove. An' there was Pinch-a-Penny, with neither wife nor child t' ease un, howlin' an' helpless in an up-stairs room o' the big house on the hill. An' the mail-boat was goin' by in the dark, with the gov'ment doctor aboard. She would never dare t' put in through the devil-may-care scatterin' o' black reefs off Rickity Tickle. An' there was no help for pain this side o' Tilt Cove—thirty mile t' the s'uth'ard! Ecod!—'twas the mess of a generation: Pinch-a-Penny Peter, the Rickity Tickle trader, yelpin' like a hurt dog an' beggin' God A'mighty for mercy in his pain! An' the mail-boat was goin' by in the dark! I mind I couldn't well believe it: for I wasn't much more than a lad, then, an' ol' Pinch-a-Penny

Peter, with his shop an' his storehouses, was near as big as the Lord in the lives of us all. But when I got under the window, with half the folk o' the place, I learned, from the noise Pinch-a-Penny was makin', that he wasn't no better than me, after all.

"An' then the mail-boat whistled. 'Twas she, sure enough, offshore in the bay! Too-oo-oot! An' again an' again! She was blowin' her head off—always nearer: a slow feelin' o' the way t' harbour. 'Twas a miracle of a dark night like that. Toot-toot! She was off the narrows. An' Cap'n Hand was a stranger to our waters—an' there was never a man o' Rickity Tickle able t' come in from mid-bay of a foggy night! 'Twas a miracle, beyond doubt. A long blast, an' ecod, she was in—her lights showin' off Blow-Me! I'm not knowin' very well what our people thought of it that night; but as for me I got it back into my head all at once that the Lord was at the elbow o' Pinch-a-Penny Peter, whatever might seem at times.

"Cap'n Hand come ashore with the doctor; an' 'tis said that when Pinch-a-Penny was stowed away, his pain all eased, he turned t' Cap'n Hand, an'—

"'Cap'n Hand,' says he, 'how'd you manage t' *do* it?'

"'Took lessons from Blind Tom Tulk.'

"'Tell me,' says Pinch-a-Penny.

"'Ears,' says Cap'n Hand.

"'What's the good o' ears?'

"'For a man t' hear his way with.'

"'Hear his way? I can't fathom it.'

"'Echoes.'

"Pinch-a-Penny Peter, t' be sure, had Blind Tom Tulk t' the big house in the mornin', an' give un the *Seventh Son* t' take down the Labrador. 'Tom,' says he, 'you can take the *Seventh Son* from here t' Jupiter if you wants to. An' I'd not be alarmed if you fished at Black Joe. I'm free t' say that I never knowed afore that ears was as good as eyes on a dark night.' But Tom Tulk said he hadn't done nothin' t' tell about. Anybody with no eyes t' speak of, says he, would find a way t' get along with his ears; an' a man with neither ears nor eyes, he'd be bound, could do very well in this world with his nose. Anyhow, you may think as you likes about that: but 'twas Blind Tom Tulk o' Rickity Tickle—an' none other than Blind Tom Tulk—that first found a use for echoes. They

was silly enough things afore Tom Tulk put un t' work, God knows! An' they're sailin' by echoes yet on our coast; an' I'm told that Tom Tulk's invention has got as far as the Alaskan seas."

The cook of the *Quick as Wink* laughed. "You mean t' say," he demanded, "that Cap'n Hand took the *Scotia* into Rickity Tickle by means o' the echoes of his whistle?"

"I does," Tumm replied.

There is more than one Newfoundland mail-boat captain getting about at times in the fog in the same way to this day.

## XXIV

### THE CREW OF THE *SEVENTH SON*

TUMM of the *Quick as Wink* was solicitously interested in his "li'l' rose-bush." It was a dwarfed plant—a glory pertinaciously flourishing out of place and in defiance of all precedent. It was however neither conspicuously scrawny nor conspicuously unhealthy. And whatever its physical defects it was splendidly courageous. But yet it seemed somehow to thrive in sheer desperation, not at all favoured by circumstances, which were dark and salty and cold, all inimical to soft beauties, God knows! but to preserve its good humour and measure of green health in spite of all that was adverse in the evil weather we encountered. I had never before seen a rose-bush grown in a flower-pot. But here was one, indeed—a lusty dwarf! It was a tiny plant, miniature of the bushes in great southern gardens, here confined and stunted, but so tenderly nourished that its little

leaves were defiantly thick and crisp and green. Tumm praised its humour—delighted in its morning freshness, was enraptured with its youthful company: and maintained, with much agreeable blasphemy, that there never had been a "li'l' bush" of such persistent optimism and good-humoured satisfaction with its situation. There was no light to boast of in Tumm's cabin. That was a place almost wholly preëmpted by a most extraordinary quantity and variety of merchandise which Tumm was anxiously engaged in exchanging for salt fish. Even with the inner doors wide and the hatch drawn back the light that ventured in was of such a quality and so abashed that its intrusion was of the most diffident sort and it seemed presently to be put altogether to rout by the gloom.

But there was a hearty sort of day in the little skylight over the counter. And it was there that Tumm kept his rose-bush. There was a narrow board across; and there was a round hole in the board, and in the round hole the red flower-pot reposed. The plant was showered with light: it aspired towards the light; and it managed somehow or other to keep in blithe humour no matter what depth

of fog was abroad, and no matter how salt and frosty the wind that was blowing, and no matter how long an alien little plant of such delicacy of constitution must remain indoors to keep from catching its death of cold. When the sun shone—and the sun shone quite often, if the truth must be told—Tumm would have the rose-bush out for an airing. It stood on the house, near the cabin hatch, with the sunshine falling warm upon it and the blue wind caressing its delighted little leaves. I had often seen old Tumm sponge its every leaf. Tumm loved the stunted little thing and nurtured its growing with fondest care. I fancied then—and I have since become convinced of it—that the "li'l' rose-bush" signified to old Tumm something pertaining to the spirit. It was dwarfed, it lacked all natural opportunity, it promised no useful beauty: but yet its courage was high and blithe; and when Tumm was most downcast, bewildered by the puzzles and perversities of life, as on the night when he told the tale of the quaint little death the Giant-Killer had died at Neck-o'-Land Bight, he seemed to discover some warm consolation in its presence aboard.

"You mark *me!*" says he, darkly signifi-

cant. "Some day I'll get a *flower* from that li'l' rose-bush!"

'Twas late fall weather, now. The winds were heavy with the weight of the season. There was the first of winter in the air: sleet was in the gales, snow fell, ice formed forward, the rigging was clogged with ice. Here and there ran the *Quick as Wink* to pick up the last of her fish and to deal out winter supplies of pork and flour to the folk that needed them most. Presently winter would fall down and tight close the ports of the shore until the warm winds blew in the spring; and no man must be forgotten, however unlucky and poor—and none wilfully neglected. 'Twas not Tumm's way to leave unfortunate folk in the lurch (whatever bad name more pious folk may give the traders): nor was it his way, indeed, to let a fish slip through his fingers that he might have profitably stowed away in the hold of the *Quick as Wink*. And still the tale of Tom Tulk went untold. Day followed day—black weather and blue. Nights went by with the forecastle bogey-stove glowing its invitation to tell stories. But the yarn of Tom Tulk—the end of the yarn—the yarn of the great deed he

had done—the tale with a moral that Blind Tom Tulk had left behind—was not begun. I wondered what that deed had been. Tom Tulk had the *Seventh Son* to take down the Labrador: he had won her from the fate that overtakes old men—and by sheer merit and incredible ingenuity. And I wondered once more how the blind old skipper of a Labradorman could live and leave a tale with a moral brave enough to be told o' black nights in harbour to this day.

One night at Tickle-My-Ribs, when trade was done, Tumm came forward for a cup of tea.

"That li'l' rose-bush o' mine ——" he began.

"Gettin' saucy?" the skipper interrupted.

"That li'l' rose-bush ——"

"Got a tooth yet?"

"Anyhow," says Tumm, indignant, "that li'l' rose-bush o' mine would sure surprise you if you could see him now."

And Tom Tulk?

Presently Tumm resumed the tale of Tom Tulk. "Where was I?" says he. "Oh, ay! I tol' you how Tom Tulk had teached Cap'n Hand t' fetch the mail-boat into Rickity Tickle of a foggy night by means o' the echoes

of his whistle. An' I tol' you how Pinch-a-Penny Peter had give Tom Tulk the *Seventh Son* t' take down north again—or t' take t' Jupiter an' back, if Tom Tulk had the mind t' risk it. An' I 'low you thinks that Tom Tulk was well-berthed an' satisfied. Satisfied? Oh, ay! Tom Tulk was never nothin' else but satisfied. A man whose religion it is t' make the best of a bad job can't very well be discontent with the best job he can get however bad it may be. But well-berthed? Not at all! The *Seventh Son* was old. I reckon that she was the worst basket that sailed the Labrador in them years. I used t' think that she was as old as Tom Tulk—an' that was eighty year old an' more. She wasn't, whatever. But she was old enough t' be grandfather t' most o' the craft that fished the coast. An' she's the great-great-grandfather of many a vessel that fishes the Labrador in these days: for she was a stout, blithe boat in her youth, an' the builders still follows her lines. But when Blind Tom Tulk begun t' fit her out for the last time she was rotten an' doubtless ashamed of her state: her hull was rotten, her spars was guilty o' dry-rot, her riggin' was infirm, her runnin' gear was

delicate with old age. Painted up, she was fair enough t' the eye; but a good push—the slap of a round gale o' wind—would have toppled her over.

"'Skipper Tom,' says Pinch-a-Penny, 'no objection if you fish Black Joe this season.'

"'So!' says Tom. 'Well, well!'

"'Nor Thumb-an'-Finger neither.'

"'Nor Thumb-an'-Finger!' says Tom. 'Dear man! That's queer!'

"'Oh, no,' says Peter. 'Nothin' queer about it. I've jus' learned that they won't insure the *Seventh Son* no more. That's all. An' with no insurance papers—an' no clause in the papers against fishin' Black Joe an' Thumb-an'-Finger—you is free t' look for the fish where you likes.'

"'Ha!' says Tom. 'That's fine!'

"'I reckon it won't trouble *you!*' Pinch-a-Penny laughed.

"'Trouble *me!*' says Tom. 'Well, no! I've never been sot on fishin' Black Joe. But all my life long I've wanted t' fish Thumb-an'-Finger. An' if it hadn't been that them insurance papers forbid it I'd have fished Thumb-an'-Finger long ago.'

"'You'll have trouble gettin' a crew,' says Peter.

"'Ha, ha!' says Tom. 'That's a good one! I reckon Blind Tom Tulk won't have no trouble gettin' a crew.'

"'As for the vessel, 'twould be small loss if you cast her away.'

"''Twould break my ol' heart t' cast her away!'

"'As it turns out,' says Peter, 'she's not much use t' nobody no more.'

"'I loves her!'

"'But Tom—oh, Tom, b'y!—if you can only —*if you can only come home loaded* ——'

"'Oh, I'll get my load!'

"''Twould be a Godsend,' says Peter. 'Things looks black enough for me when it comes t' settlement-time in the fall o' the year. An' I'm not countin' on the *Seventh Son* very much this year. I'm dependin' on a good Labrador fishery. I'm countin' on my new vessels an' young skippers. An' if the *Seventh Son* should come home loaded 'twould be all clear gain.'

"'You depend on Blind Tom Tulk,' says Tom. '*He's* the lad t' get his load.'

"'If the other vessels fail, an' the ol' *Seventh Son* gets her load ——'

"'Ay, sir?'

"'I can't *tell* you,' says Peter, 'what that would mean—t' me!'

"It turned out as Pinch-a-Penny had said. Tom Tulk had trouble gettin' a fishin' crew for the *Seventh Son*. When 'twas noised about that nobody would insure her the lads fought shy o' the risk. Tom Tulk was all right! No fault t' find with he! But the *Seventh Son*—an ol' wash-tub that nobody would insure! I heard un talk it over on the hill by the Church o' England, where the men-folk gather for gossip of a Sunday evenin'; an' they determined, one an' all, that 'twould be better t' stay ashore an' fish the Cow-house Grounds with hook an' line than venture down north on the *Seventh Son*. But ol' Tom wasn't daunted. Not he! 'In these here parts,' says he, 'there's many an old man wantin' a berth.' An' 'twas old men he shipped—old, old men, with life a heavy burden, or tired o' livin' off the gov'ment, or weary with dwellin' with their own posterity. 'I'm an ol' man wantin' a berth,' says Tom, 'an' I reckon

there's many another like me, willin' for labour an' not at all particular as to the risk.' 'Twas true. Tom shipped ol' George Shot o' White Island Tickle, an' Uncle Amos Lull o' Delilah Island, an' Palsied Tom Tuttle o' Pine Cove, an' Bald John Root o' Root Bight—a toothless, dodderin' crew: a crew o' baldheads an' graybeards. Every man past his labour, except the first hand, who went for a share an' a half, because he wanted t' be wed in the fall, an' except the cook's young grandson, who went because he knowed no better, an' except me, who went jus' for the fun o' the thing.

"'You better stay t' home, Tumm,' says Tom.

"'Me?' says I. 'Not so! I wants t' see these ol' ghosts an' great-gran'fathers haul the cod-traps.'

"'Very good!' says he, with his fried eyes angry. 'Very good, sir! An' you'll find that the aged haves a will for labour!'

"I was sorry.

"'Skipper Tom!' says I.

"'What now?'

"'It won't do you no harm on the cruise, sir,' says I, 't' have a young feller like me—somewheres handy?'

"'Tumm,' says he, 'I misjudged you. God bless ye!'"

Tumm laughed.

"What you laughin' at?" the skipper of the *Quick as Wink* demanded.

"Oh," Tumm replied, "jus' at that ol' rotten basket of a *Seventh Son* puttin' out from Rickity Tickle t' fish the Labrador with a blind skipper an' a crew o' baldheads an' graybeards stumblin' about the decks!"

He laughed heartily.

## XXV

## DECKS AWASH

"IT didn't turn out as Tom Tulk had said. 'Twould be a grand year for fish, says he; but they wasn't no fish—not for many. Skipper Tom took the *Seventh Son* through the Straits in a westerly blow, an' beat the fleet north at his leisure, with leave t' pick an' choose his berth. He tried Black Joe. No insurance t' stop un. But there was nothin' there. An' glad I was of it. He was first at Mugford Tickle. No fish there. 'Twas Pinch-Me Head, below Mugford, last choice for Tom; an' down went the traps, fair between the Thumb an' the Finger—sea room t' get out, with fair warnin', but no harbour near by, an' a devilish shore t' go t' wreck on. No fish: not a fin—not a tail. The Barnyards, then; an' thereafter the Hen-an'-Chickens, Run-by-Guess an' Baby Tickle. No fish—an' the days o' that season scootin' by! No fish for nobody: Green Bay schooners with their salt not touched, an' Bonavist' men, Trinity fore-an'-afters an'

Twillingate skippers flutterin' the length o' the coast half mad for fish an' ease o' mind.

"'Twas the Second Lean Year: many an outport merchant, caught in the Labrador gamble, went under in the fall. But Blind Tom Tulk, with Pinch-a-Penny Peter on his mind, never give up: for says he, 'twas his last season on the coast, an' he had a mind t' make a load of it, God help un! From Baby Tickle t' Stop-a-Bit Bay an' Try-Again: a quintal here an' a quintal there—we'd something t' show, whatever, when Blind Tom Tulk up with the traps in the middle o' the night an' put back t' the Thumb-an'-Finger o' Pinch-Me with a fair wind.

"The fish struck in: a fortnight without sleep—an' the *Seventh Son* was loaded.

"'A quintal or two more,' says Tom, 'wouldn't hurt Pinch-a-Penny's fortune none.'

"No, no!

"'She'll carry more yet,' says Tom.

"We stowed more away.

"'Ecod!' says Tom; 'she'll do very well a little bit deeper still, I'll be bound!'

"Down she went!

"'Oh, well,' says Tom, 'jus' another quintal or two!'

"Another quintal or two—another an' another! Fish for the takin'! Hold fair jammed t' the hatches with green cod. 'Twas beyond Skipper Tom t' cry quits or enough.

"'Stow un in the cabin,' says he; 'an' then we'll load the deck. Isn't often a man gets a load in a failed season; an' as for me,' says he, 'I'm so old at this labour that I'd as lief sleep with a fish as a friend. My last v'y'ge,' says he; 'an' I'll leave a tale for forecastle tellin' o' black nights for years t' come on this coast, or I'll know the reason why. Tale o' Blind Tom Tulk's last cruise,' says he; 'they'll tell it from Twillingate Long Point nor'ard t' Cake-o'-Soap Harbour an' the huts o' the huskies when ol' Tom Tulk's bones is growed used t' their rest. If 'tisn't a tale,' says he, ''twill be a song. They isn't goin' t' forget *me* in a hurry if the *Seventh Son* ever sees Rickity Tickle again.'

"An' the coast remembers. Song an' tale: Tom Tulk got his deserts in the records:

> "'He sailed with his decks awash!
> *He sailed with his decks awash-wash-wash,*
> *He sailed with his decks awash!*'

"The *Seventh Son* settled with her burden o' the catch. Down she goes—lower an' lower—

'til her decks was near flush with the sea. A last haul: then a clear night—stars above t' the last star of all—blood an' the flare o' torches on deck—an' at dawn Tom Tulk called it a load.

"'Loaded!' says he.

"Ay, loaded!

"'Decks awash!' says he; 'we'll get the gear aboard, lads, an' put t' sea.'

"'No sleep?' says the first hand.

"'I wants t' go home,' says Tom.

"'Crew's all wore out, Skipper Tom.'

"'Ah, but I wants t' go home!' says Tom Tulk.

"'Twas a fine night, that night. I mind it well—dark o' the moon: stars out an' a favourin' wind for deep craft. An' the Thumb-an'-Finger o' Pinch-Me was big in the shadows, with a flash o' slow breakers between. Glad t' get out?—oh, ay: for 'tis no place for a fishin' craft off Pinch-Me Head. The sea was aboard us then. A wet deck: an' I had never afore trod a wet deck of a tender night with the wind behind. 'Twas uncanny: 'twas fair irreligious—a mad temptation o' the hell where winds is brewed. But Skipper Tom would have it so, an' was easy in his mind, so far as a man could tell: oh, jus'

allowin', says he, t' creep alongshore, harbour t' harbour, waitin' for fair winds, takin' it easy, dawdlin' an' lazy, foolin' with the weather, till 'twas time t' cross the Straits. No objection at all, says he, t' slow sailin' by day or night: for 'twould make the fleet rage an' wonder—an' they'd ever remember the deed—t' see Blind Tom Tulk go home with decks awash of a failed season. 'Twas what he'd wanted all along: a thing t' be remembered—a deed beyond the deeds o' men with eyes. What's time, says he, to a loaded craft of a failed season?—with the price o' fish jumpin' towards the sky in the hungry world beyond.

"An' so we loafed t' the s'uth'ard, puttin' up o' nights, anchor down in safe harbour when the winds blew evil, an' stealin' a march when the weather was kindly. An' we come in this way t' High Roost, Tickle-Me-Ribs, Dirty-Face Bight an' the Poor Maid's Secret, safe sailin', if slow, but with the Harbourless Shore ahead. 'Twas the Harbourless Shore I dreaded. All very well, thinks I, t' boast a way through harboured waters; but with a stretch o' careless cliffs t' face the matter was not the same.

"At Poor Maid's Secret I cotched Skipper

Tom with his nose t' the glass: his eyes, too, t' be sure—but so close t' that cheap Yankee barometer that the tip of his nose rubbed the bulb.

"'You're a good lad, Tumm,' says he.

"'Ay?' says I.

"'You're a honest lad.'

"'Ay?'

"'I'm blind,' says he.

"It didn't strike me as anything out o' the way. 'Sure, you're blind!' says I. 'Everybody knows it. You've been blind since I was a lad.'

"'I don't mean that way, Tumm.'

"'You mean, Skipper Tom, that you're—that you're—*blind?*'

"'Ay,' says he, 'I'm blind. I've nothin' at all but ears t' help me get home. It—it—happened las' night—when I was asleep. They wasn't no dawn for me this mornin'. I—I—been kind o' keepin' it t' myself. But I 'low somebody ought t' know.'

"Still I wasn't put out. 'Well?' says I.

"'Well?' says he. 'What you think, Tumm?'

"'It won't make no difference t' you, will it,

Skipper Tom?' says I. 'Can't you get along jus' the same?'

"You see, I couldn't believe that blindness *mattered* t' Blind Tom Tulk.

"'Ears isn't so bad,' says he, 'when you knows how t' use un. Anyhow, I isn't goin' t' whimper at *my* age. 'Tis a bad job. I'll make the best of it. What's the readin'?'

"I took a squint at the glass.

"'I can't *hear* that glass drop,' says he; 'but the weather-sense I got tells me that it ought t' be fallin' with a noise like a clap o' thunder.'

"'Readin's fair,' says I.

"'Fair!'

"'Fair an' fine.'

"'A wonderful liar, that cheap Yankee glass!' says he.

"'Wind's blowin' fair, too, Skipper Tom.'

"'Ay,' says he; 'my cheek tol' me that. Wind's fair—an' the Harbourless Shore t' get past with a load o' fish—an' we must make it in fair winds or not at all—an' what'll I do, Tumm?'

"'A fair wind, a blue sky, an' a kindly glass,' says I.

"'The glass lies!'

"'Not the feel o' things.'

"'That's it!' says he; 'the feel o' things says wait. But she'll blow foul for a month if she starts. . . . An' the wind's fair, lad, an' the glass tells its own tale o' the weather t' come, an' Tom Tulk's growed old, an' can't trust hisself no more—an' wants t' get home with his load.'

"'Well?' says I.

"'Call the crew,' says he; 'we'll trust that Yankee glass an' put t' sea.'"

## XXVI

### "ALL BLIND BUT THE BLIND"

"I TOOK un on deck. 'Twas never needed t' be sure, but I led un by the hand where I could go meself in the dark—a broken, helpless ol' feller, long past eighty, an' gone stone-blind all at once. 'Twas not needed t' tell me t' hold my tongue. I'm not knowin' whether he wanted me to or not. There was never a word from he, whatever, on that score. 'Twas jus'—'Tumm, I'm blind!'—an' no more. How old he was!—how old the feel of his fingers beside the only other hand I knowed, Bessie Tot's little hand, a tender thing t' touch, by times, when the little stars was winkin' on the road t' Gull Island Cove, an' the night was holy as my own young heart. But Blind Tom Tulk—oh, Lord, how old! Growed old in a moment with the close an' last snap o' the shutters of his mind. He'd shrivelled in the frost—a leaf, ay, bitten deep by the cold o' fall.

"I sot un down aft; an' I'll never forget the

look he bore for a little while—the look of a faded, crumpled, castaway thing, aged long beyond use, it seemed, an' past belief. I heard un whisper, 'The best of a bad job, Tom Tulk!' An' then he took hold of his humour an' cheered up; an' he was blithe enough, believe me, while the first hand put sail on the *Seventh Son* an' took her t' sea, with the length o' the Harbourless Shore t' run past. Never a man aboard could guess he'd gone blind.

"An' then a threat o' bad weather: down went the Yankee telltale—down an' down: you'd think she was bound t' drop the bottom out, with a blue sky t' belie her, an' the sun warm, an' a lazy little wind comin' up the coast t' push the *Seventh Son* towards haven.

"'Lyin' again!' says Blind Tom Tulk.

"'She've a loud voice, sir,' says I.

"'Ay,' says he; 'most liars has. There won't be no change afore night o' the morrow, an' we'll be past Mummer's Head, by then, please God, with harbours t' run to in case o' need.'

"True enough, too; an' so it turned out—a gale brewin' towards close o' the next day; an' Mummers' Head behind, an' harbours near by.

But the fog come down: a soggy time—thick mist for clear eyes, a slow, black sea, an' no peep o' shore. It didn't need no glass t' tell that there was trouble abroad for sailin' craft: the news o' wind was in a man's own heart—his sense o' the sea an' his ears for peril. If Blind Tom Tulk was blind, stone blind, he was yet on deck, fore an' aft, as clever as you likes, with a good grip on his courage. Puffs o' wind jumpin' on us, now: saucy little slaps in the face—leapin' by with a laugh at us: the black sea showin' its teeth. An' round went the wind t' the s'uth'ard in a way t' make your heart jump: 'twas no time at all afore we was beatin' into the teeth o' what blew. No gale yet: jus' the promise o' big wind—with the fog down an' thick night fallin'. An' the *Seventh Son* with decks awash: 'twas disquietin', believe me, t' feel her labour along, like an overburdened man.

"So the crew felt: a fidgety lot, by now—never a man below, never a voice lifted, never a laugh t' be heard; an' all hands, from the first hand at the wheel t' the cook's boy squattin' woebegone by the galley, starin' big-eyed into the mist, as if waitin' t' greet the first

big wet swishin' squall o' what was comin'. 'Twas a time, thinks I, t' take in sail an' t' lash the deck-load fast, afore the big wind cotched us; but Skipper Tom would have none o' *that*. She was doin' very well, says he: his feet told un so; an' praise the Lord she was below Mummers' Head, with Bread-an'-Butter Harbour t' run to.

"'Bread-an'-Butter Harbour, Skipper Tom!' snorts the first hand. 'An' every man blind in the mist!'

"'All blind but the blind!' says Blind Tom Tulk.

"If any man had eyes t' see in that black fog, 'twas surely Skipper Tom!"

## XXVII

### "LIVES O' MEN".

"WE got the first puff o' the gale jus' afore dark fell down. It come out o' the mist on the jump. There was a hiss in the dusk t' win'ard —an' then a flood o' white spray. The *Seventh Son*, with all sail spread, went over to it, sulky an' slow with her weight o' fish. It seemed she'd not stop, once she got goin', an' she held so long in doubt, frothy water t' the hatches, that I 'lowed she'd no heart t' stand up. But up she come, at last, good ol' girl that she was! an' the first hand spilled the wind an' held her up in a peltin' smother o' spray until the squall went by. 'Tis easy t' recall that the wind fell flat then: for the tales o' this coast have it so, every one—a white squall, a black, breathless time, an' the devil t' pay for a night an' a day. The gale o' the Second Lean Year: the Labrador fleet bound home, light laden, an' caught offshore in a black mist—an' blowed

"'WHAT'S A DECK LOAD O' FISH TO THE LIVES O' MEN?'"

t' shreds an' splinters afore dawn o' the next day!

"Never a wind like that afore, they says. An' ecod, I'll swear that the death an' ruin it worked hasn't been matched in my time. Ay, a flat time after the first squall: the sea up a bit —a long, black roll—an' neither whisper nor breath in the hot mist. 'Twas like a dark room with a ghost in it. The *Seventh Son* fell away into the trough; an' there she rolled, like a water-logged derelict, as much as the stomach o' mortal could stand, with Skipper Tom sayin' never a word about sail or fish, though 'twas in every man's mind t' shorten the one an' jettison some part o' the other.

"'Be a breeze by an' by,' says he.

"'A tempest!' says the first hand.

"'Ay,' says Skipper Tom; 'wind enough comin' down t' blow nails in a coffin.'

"'I'll shorten sail,' says the first hand.

"'Oh, no!' says Tom. 'We can't get nowhere without *sail*. An' we *got* t' get out o' *this*.'

"The first hand jumped.

"'I'm old,' says Tom, 'an' I knows there's no mercy in what's comin'.'

"'Thinkin' about gettin' some o' this fish overside?' says the first hand.

"'Well, no,' says Tom; 'no, lad—I wasn't.'

"'Nar a quintal?'

"'I got a load of a failed season,' says Tom. 'I—I—wants t' take it home. An' I thinks I knows a way—if she breezes up a bit.'

"'She's deep,' says the first hand.

"'Deep laden!' says Tom. 'Ay, thank God! She's deep laden of a failed season!'

"The first hand stamped his foot like a woman. 'Too deep for wind! She'll sink!'

"'She's below Mummers' Head,' says Tom, 'an' there's snug water at Bread-an'-Butter Harbour.'

"'Snug water!' says the first hand. '"Harbour in fog 's no harbour at all." 'Tis a sayin'.'

"'There's another,' says Tom: '"Ears an' hears not."'

"'What's a deck-load o' fish t' the lives o' men?'

"'I'm old enough t' know,' says the skipper, 'that a deck-load o' fish *is* the lives o' men. An' by God,' says he, jumpin' up—'by the grace o' God to a blind old man who's done his work in the world, I'll get *my* load home!'

"Below Mummers' Head, now, as I've said: the Harbourless Shore past; an' Tom Tulk knowed where he was. I had watched un that day—watched un smell the wind an' the coast an' feel the vessel underfoot. I had been forever at his elbow—t' be his eyes, says he. But it seemed t' me that he needed no eyes at all: for he'd know all I said afore I opened my mouth. An' I knowed that he knowed where he was. 'Mummers' Head,' says he, that afternoon, afore the fog got thick. 'Does you see it, Tumm? Is you sure? It mightn't be Daffy-Down-Dilly? No, no; 'tis Mummers' Head—a black rock, black in the mist, spruce-crested, eh? an' a red cliff, like a man's hand, bloody after fishin'.' 'Twas even so! 'Mummers' Head, sure enough,' says he; 'an' now I knows where I is.'

"Then up the coast—a beat into the wind, with Skipper Tom keepin' track o' the ground she gained.

"'Easy!' says he t' the first hand, who had the wheel. 'I'm lookin' for Bread-an'-Butter Harbour.'

"'*Lookin'* for Bread-an'-Butter Harbour!' says the first hand. 'An' a fog like this!'

"'Ay,' says the skipper, 'I'm lookin' for Bread-an'-Butter Harbour. An' I'll find it, too, as we beats up the shore. 'Tis hereabouts. Go close. Don't be afeared o' the coast. 'Tis a decent place—clear water an' plenty o' room. I knows it of old. I've fished it, boy an' man. Why, Lord,' says he, 'my first blind season was fished out o' Bread-an'-Butter Harbour! 'Twas hereabouts that I learned t' use my ears; an' I can't be fooled by a gale o' wind,' says he, 'an' they isn't no fog can keep me out o' Bread-an'-Butter when I wants t' go in.'

"An' so we had come through the day, until the squall struck, an' the black calm followed, in which we lay when the first hand made his complaint.

"'Aft, here, lads!' says Skipper Tom.

"They come aft over the decks: the hearts scared out o' the pack of un.

"'Every man for hisself!' says Tom. 'I'm gone blind. I'll not hide it. I can't see a inch. But I knows where I is, an' I knows my way about. Will it be the first hand or me?'

"'I quit,' says the first hand.

"'Hol' on!' says Skipper Tom. 'Give the lads a choice, an you will.'

"'I tells you I quit!' says the first hand. 'I don't know where I is.'

"'Well, lads?'

"They stood by Skipper Tom. There wasn't no other wisdom handy on the *Seventh Son.* Tom Tulk had been half blind so long that nobody thought of un as havin' eyes at all; an' as for his bein' stone blind, 'twas one an' the same—an' it didn't make no difference—an' nobody cared a hang about that."

## XXVIII

### CHAPTER TWELVE

"TOM TULK went for'ard. He run foul o' nothin' at all: he didn't stretch out a hand t' feel his way: he didn't once hesitate or stumble. But his ol' gray face was grim; an' I reckoned, as he went, that he was too sure of his knowledge o' the vessel t' halt an' wonder, an' far too proud t' ask aid of any man o' the crew. He seemed t' look the decks over, like a man with sharp eyes, an' he pulled an' hauled at this an' that, t' make sure that all was shipshape for the gale that was comin' down. An' all this time the first hand an' the cook's boy an' the graybeards an' baldheads stood gawkin' at his course. What a fishin' crew! Every man on his last legs—a toothless, dried up, palsied lot—save the first hand an' the cook's boy an' me. I reckon that never a craft as rotten as the ol' *Seventh Son* sailed those seas afore, an' that never an ol' craft, in all the seas o' the world, come face t' face, decks awash with the

fruits of old men's toil, with the promise o' wind that was then abroad; an' I reckon that never afore was a blind ol' man like Tom Tulk master of a vessel in these waters, nor has been since, nor ever will be again. But it didn't trouble Tom Tulk a whit. I reckon he was pleased an' proud. He come aft, steppin' with the sure feet of a youth, with his head in the air, an' with his blind eyes swingin' this way an' that, as if he could see like a hawk and would be damned hard on all offenders. An' the ol' fellers was astounded—an' heartened, too, I 'low.

"He paused by the cabin hatch. 'We're old men,' says he.

"They nodded—as old men will.

"'Though we're old men,' says he, 'we got our load.'

"'Ay, b'y!' says they.

"'By the grace o' God,' says Tom, 'us ol' men will get our load home.'

"If 'twasn't a cheer 'twas much like it.

"'Fog abroad an' a gale o' wind comin' down,' says Tom. 'An' in a fog like this we're all blind but the blind. You trust ol' Tom Tulk an' what ol' Tom Tulk has learned in the last

years of his life. Tom Tulk knows the way t' Bread-an'-Butter Harbour. An' Tom Tulk will take this craft an' every fin an' tail of her load o' fish into Bread-an'-Butter Harbour with the first breeze o' wind if the crew stands by. Blind! Me blind! Why, lads, old as I am, an' blind as I am, I can yet see like a hungry gull!'

"Then ol' Tom Tulk went below, leavin' word t' be called, in haste, when the first breath o' wind come blowin' down from the s'uth'ard. . . .

"An' there we was. 'Twas flat, hot, black calm. The *Seventh Son* tossed about in the big black swells. We was somewheres off the Labrador coast. We had come past Mummers' Head: we was beyond the Harbourless Shore. An' Bread-an'-Butter Harbour was near by. But where? An' how find the narrows t' Bread-an'-Butter in a fog like that? 'Twas time for stout craft t' get clear o' the coast—t' scurry off t' the open sea an' ride out the gale. But the *Seventh Son* was no stout craft. She would groan an' snap an' fall all apart in a big breeze o' wind. . . . Breeze o' wind! Ecod! There would be the devil

an' all t' pay when the gale fell down. A flat, black time—a fog like hot steam! The whole world waitin' for a tantrum o' weather! Is you ever been out in a hot fog? No: not on this coast. Not in a fog so thick an' hot that it fetched out the sweat. I tells you, lads, I was *afraid!* Me! Tumm! An' the gale that presently come down from the s'uth'ard was a thing t' make any man quail. You've heard tell of it, every one o' ye—the gale o' Second Lean Labrador Year. . . . An' I sot on the house watchin' the ol' men amidships t' ease my fears. An' 'twas a sight I'll never forget. Them old, old men! How used t' toil an' weather an' peril they was! An' how near they had come t' the end o' life. They searched out the weather signs: they mumbled together —they nodded their old heads an' they shook their old heads. They was wonderful wise an' solemn. It seemed t' me then—an' I've never had cause t' change my mind—that 'twas not their lives they feared t' lose.

"Them ol' fellers wanted t' save the fish. Old as they was they had got a load of a failed season. *An' they wanted t' get that load o' fish home.* . . .

"Presently I went below t' talk with ol' Tom Tulk. Skipper Tom an' me was friends. An' I was uneasy.

"'Skipper Tom,' says I, 'is you sure that you knows the way t' Bread-an'-Butter?'

"He chuckled. 'Sure?' says he.

"'Ay.'

"'Me?' says he. 'Why, Tumm, I'm so sure that I'd bet a shillin' on it!'

"'I've no wish t' be saucy, sir,' says I. 'But I'm fair achin' t' know ——'

"'Ah-ha!' says he. 'I'll not tell you how, Tumm.'

"'But, sir ——'

"'You jus' wait an' see, Tumm,' says he, 'what a man with fried eyes can do when he's bound an' determined t' make the best of a bad job.'

"'Anyhow,' says I, 'I'm glad t' see that you're ridin' easy in your mind.'

"'Twas near pitch dark in the cabin. The skylight was no more than a patch o' dirty light.

"'Tumm,' says Tom, 'light the lamp.'

"'Name o' wonder!' says I. 'What for?'

"''Tis a proper thing t' do in a black fog like this.'

"'But you is blind!'

"'T' be sure, I'm blind! But that's no good reason why I should *act* as if I was blind. An' I'm thinkin' that a little blaze o' light down here would cheer me up. Anyhow, I'm readin'.'

"'Readin'!'

"I lit the cabin lamp. An' there was Blind Tom Tulk leanin' over the table with his Bible spread open afore un. It give me a wonderful turn.

"'Skipper Tom,' says I, 'you isn't by any chance got back your sight?'

"'Oh, no,' says he. 'I'm as blind as a bat.'

"'Then what you got your Bible open for?'

"'I'm *readin'*, Tumm! Ever read the Bible?'

"'I used to.'

"'Well, then,' says he, 'you listen t' this li'l' chapter about ol' men. Ecclesiastes, chapter twelve. Hum! *Remember now thy Creator in the days o' thy youth*,' says he, with his eyes on the page, jus' as if he could see like a parson, '*while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them: while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened; nor the clouds return after rain: in the days when the*

*keepers o' the house shall tremble, an' the strong men shall bow themselves, an' the grinders cease because they are few, an' those that look out o' the windows be darkened; an' the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound o' the grindin' is low, an' he shall rise up at the voice o' the bird, an' all the daughters o' music shall be brought low: also when they shall be afraid o' that which is high, an' fears shall be in the way, an' the almond tree shall flourish, an' the grasshopper shall be a burden, an' desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, an' the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, an' the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.'*

"Old Tom looked up from the page that he could not see at all.

"'Tumm!' he whispered.

"'Ay, sir?'

"'*Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken.* Remember that windy night at Neck-o'-Land Bight? Remember the time when the little Giant-Killer's soul took

flight for the starry coasts he so longed t' sail?'

"'I remember, sir.'

"'*An' the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* It seems t' me, somehow, that the little feller is still hangin' offshore, somewhere beyond the fog an' clouds, as he said he would, waitin' for me t' go cruisin' with un t' them far-away places.'

"The first hand poked his head down the cabin hatch in haste an' worry.

"'Draught o' wind from the s'uth'ard, sir,' says he.

"'*Let us hear the conclusion o' the whole matter*,' says Tom t' me, his great thumb on the page o' the Book, though whether the Book was upside down or not I don't know: '*A good man makes the best of a bad job: for this is the whole duty o' man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.*'

"An' then he went on deck t' face the work that was afore un."

## XXIX

### THE BEST OF THE JOB

"IT breezed up: not a squally wind, for that we never could have lived through—a steady enough wind, t' be sure, as Skipper Tom had looked for, but puffin' up an' up. We begun t' beat t' the s'uth'ard again, Skipper Tom goin' easy, an' blessin' the wind that blowed. 'You keep your courage an' stand by, lads, whatever happens,' says he, rubbin' his ol' hands, 'an' I'll have you safe in Bread-an'-Butter Harbour afore the big wind falls down.' He took the *Seventh Son* inshore, again an' again, until the noise o' breakers fetched a yelp o' 'Hard-a-lee!' from the lookout in the bow; an' then the ol' man went for'ard hisself: for, says he with a grin, eyes wasn't no good of a foggy night, an' he 'lowed, by the sound o' things, that he was close t' Bread-an'-Butter Harbour.

"In an' out went the *Seventh Son*, lookin' for Bread-an'-Butter, by orders o' Blind Tom Tulk: never far t' sea—out a bit, with the crew breathin' easy, an' then in, every man's heart

in his mouth, until Tom Tulk, his ears cocked t' the breakers, sung 'Hard-a-lee!' No gale yet, mark you: but the wind risin' with every puff, an' small time left, by all the signs, afore 'twould blow the *Seventh Son* out o' the water. A dark night, now, black with fog, black t' the best eyes: a blind skipper, the schooner deep in a long, black swell, an' Tom Tulk takin' her inshore until the breakers seemed fair under her bows, though no man could see t' tell.

"Tom Tulk would stiffen a bit when he got ear o' the first crash o' water; an' then he'd listen—an' listen—with his southerly ear open t' the shore—an' his blind eyes closed—while every man aboard waited for the next long sea t' fling the schooner at the cliffs.

"Every time, ecod! with the noise o' breakers in a man's ears, 'twas like the gift o' life when Tom Tulk sung out 'Hard-a-lee!' an' the schooner turned tail on the coast.

"'She's hereabouts,' says he. 'Next time I'll find her.'

"'Skipper Tom,' says I, 'is you sure?'

"'Ah-ha!" he chuckled. 'What's the matter with your voice, Tumm?'

"''Tis shakin' with fear,' says I.

"'Ah-ha!' says he. 'Too much fog for you, eh?'

"'Too much fog an' dark, indeed. I can't see half a schooner-length.'

"'No need!' says he.

"'Skipper Tom ——'

"'Ah-ha!' he laughed. 'Fried my sight at the ice, did I? An' I'm stone blind, is I? Ah-ha! I'll show this crew how t' get along without eyes! I'll show this crew how t' make the best of a bad job!'

"'But, Skipper Tom ——'

"'Ah-ha!' says he. 'There's many little voices in the world that the blind can hear.'

"'Dear man!' says I. ''Tis as dark as the mouth o' The Pit!'

"'I couldn't get along so well,' says he, 'if I had all the eyes aboard. 'Tis *ears* a man needs in a tight place like this. *Eyes* isn't no good of a foggy night.'

"But Tom Tulk couldn't find Bread-an'-Butter. In went the *Seventh Son*—an' out again. An' in once more an' out again, makin' southward a little, every leg: an' each time Tom Tulk shook his head an' howled 'Hard-a-

lee!' an' the schooner come about an' put t' sea in haste.

"'I can't be lost!' says Tom. 'She's somewheres hereabouts. She've *got* t' be! I'll hear her spittin' soon.'

"Out an' in: in an' out—an' in so close, this time, that I cotched a flash o' white in the dark.

"'God's sake!' says I. 'Not so close!'

"'I knows my way,' says he.

"Half a gale, now; an' the sea too much for a craft with decks awash. My heart fell fair t' my belly with every pitch o' the old ship.

"Then:

"'Hear that!' yells Tom.

"'Hear what?—God's mercy, we're lost!'

"'Ah-ha!' says he; '*there* she is!'

"Breakers, sure enough! I hearkened—a roar o' water: a hollow boom-boom, a slap an' a swish.

"'That's ol' Hole-in-the-Wall,' says Tom, with a bit of a chuckle. 'That's ol' Hole-in-the-Wall coughin' her life out. I knowed she'd have a cold in a southerly sea. Hear that, Tumm? Ah-ha!'

"We run aft.

"'Bearin's enough for the blind,' says Tom, when he got the wheel in his hands. 'Harbour's forty fathom t' the north. A deep channel—an' a broad way. Ah-ha!—nothin' like ears of a foggy night. An' now I'll take her in.'

"'Twas plain as a voice: the sea in that deep cave they calls Hole-in-the-Wall—a boom-boom, like the beat of a drum, with a cough t' follow. It could never be mistaken. Boom-boom!—an' a slap an' a cough an' a hiss. The same with every sea: Boom-boom!—an' a slap an' a cough an' a hiss. 'Twas for this that Tom Tulk had hearkened so long—the voice o' Hole-in-the Wall, near by the narrows t' Bread-an'-Butter Harbour: Boom-boom!—an' a slap an' a cough an' a hiss."

## XXX

### A WHITE ROSE

"BLIND TOM put the schooner at the shore. 'Keep your courage, lads!' sings he. ''Twill soon be over. I can see that shore like a gull in the sunlight. An' stand by t' let go the anchor an' take in sail. No yelpin', lads,' says he, 'for I got trouble enough with my ears in this here howl o' wind.' Gale down, then, all of a sudden: a squall an' a flood o' cold rain—an' the *Seventh Son* on a run for the rocks like a scared rabbit. 'Ah-ha, there she is!' says Tom. 'We're goin' in!' There she was, sure enough: Boom-boom!—an' a slap an' a cough an' a hiss. 'Snug water inside,' says Tom. 'I can see like a hawk—like a hawk!' An' 'twas pitch dark: black as a wolf's throat—an' a hellish confusion o' wind an' sea, an' the fear o' death before an' behind. Sight o' nothin' at all: jus' noise—an' no eyes needed t' tell what lay ahead: a mess o' rock an' broken water below big cliffs.

"'Like a hawk!' yells Tom. 'I can see like a hawk!'

"All over in a flash, now, thinks we: breakers under the bows; an' nothin' t' do but hang on an' make the best of it when she struck. It seemed t' me, all of a sudden, that I could put out my hand an' touch a cliff; there was the feel o' rock near by—an' ecod, I fair wished the *Seventh Son* would strike, an' splinter up, an' be done with the job, for I couldn't stand it no longer! Then the cook's boy yelped. An' I'm not knowin' what might have happened on the heels o' that child's scream—I leaped, meself, I knows, an' shivered, an' heard a howl in the dark beside me—I'm not knowin' what might have happened had not the wind failed all at once, an' the schooner lost way, with her canvas flappin', an' had not the sea gone still, an' the noise o' wind an' breakers somehow gone out o' the world.

"'Bread-an'-Butter,' says Skipper Tom t' the first hand. 'Easy water ahead. Get the sail off her an' hang her down for fine weather.'

"Well, well, Blind Tom Tulk was free t' say that it wasn't so bad for a ol' feller like he, but

nothin' much t' boast of: for, says he, over a cup o' tea, that night, a man with no eyes in his head would do very well with his ears, if he had a mind t' make the best of a bad job. An' ol' Hole-in-the-Wall was friend o' his. A teacher, for sure: for Hole-in-the-Wall had fetched Tom Tulk t' harbour out of a mist in the days of his first blind season; an' thereafter he had learned t' do very well with his ears—by means of all the little voices in the world, says he, which speak to a man without eyes. An' so he told Pinch-a-Penny Peter, when he went ashore at Rickity Tickle, with the *Seventh Son* at anchor in Squid Cove, loaded deep of a failed season. 'An' now, Peter,' says he, 'I'm past my labour, an' I'll take my rest, which I've earned in a long life, well spent. Short allowance o' sight these last few years,' says he; 'but I done well enough, somehow or other, with what I had, by makin' the best of a bad job.'

"'You done well, Tom!' says Pinch-a-Penny Peter.

"'Oh, nothin' much,' says Tom. 'There's many little voices in the world t' speak t' them that are blind.'

"'Twas very well with Tom Tulk, after that:

a staff at last—an' many a gossipy dawdle on the roads—an' time for yarns an' children—an' a seat in the sun of a fine afternoon—an' many a walk t' the graveyard where the little Giant-Killer lay. Tom Tulk had lived a tale with a moral, as every good man should do. I tells it to you. You'll tell it elsewhere. 'Twill go on an' on. For generations t' come they'll tell it in the forecastles o' Labrador craft in harbour. A tale with a moral—as every good man should live! The tale o' Blind Tom Tulk, ecod!—the blind skipper who fetched his load home of a failed season. 'I'm past my labour,' says Tom Tulk, when he used t' sit in the sun, 'an' I'm enjoyin' the fruits o' toil. I loved my life pretty near all my days: never better than after I had fried my sight at the ice, an' they was more interest in gettin' along. I got one thing more t' look forward to,' says he, 'an' I 'low I'll like that, too. In my old age, sittin' here in the sun, with not much else t' think of, an' life gone past, I've growed wonderful curious about—That!'

"You know what he meant."

And the tale of Tom Tulk was told.

Nobody said a word. There was silence—

such as sometimes falls upon men profoundly affected by the beauty of some achievement beyond their own power. This is not envy: it is humility. Presently old Tumm got up and went forward. It was then that the cook—a man of poor spirit—first called the tale a "pack o' lies." But the tale was true. And if you doubt it, as indeed you may, it is, as Tumm subsequently declared, because it shames you. The denial of splendid deeds creates suspicion. There is no virtue in cynicism: there is much profit in faith—in the will to accept for truth the narrative of some performance of power and high loveliness and thereby to be moved to a measure of emulation. One loses no voltage of truth: one gains a moving vision—the power unmeasurable in beneficence. By and by Tumm returned. He was grinning. Never before had I seen the old fellow so broadly delighted. He was in a rapture. And he had something under his coat, carried with tenderness: which, when the time was ripe, and he had looked us each in the eye, he disclosed in a fashion the most dramatic. It was the "li'l' rose-bush." Tumm stood off and regarded it with his head cocked in infinite pride

and delight. It was the rose-bush, sure enough! —old Tumm's cherished rose-bush: that "li'l' rose-bush" which Tumm had nourished with solicitude and in faith, the "li'l' rose-bush" of some significance of the spirit, which had flourished into a scrawny, scraggly health, in spite of its inimical surroundings, and to which Tumm was used to turning for consolation when he was downcast by the puzzles and perversities of life.

"Boys," he announced, "my li'l' bush has got a flower!"

It was a little white rose.

THE END

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